Introduction to Chapter One

In The Name Of Allah (S.W.T.), the Beneficent, the Merciful

TAWHEED

Knowing God and Worshipping Him

A Human being is constantly in search of knowing the Truth. He explores different ways in which to confirm his beliefs and when he succeeds in going back to his *FITRA* (Nature), he eventually reaches the point where he realises the need of a Master and Creator - Allah (S.W.T.). In the Islamic beliefs (*Aqaidi-Islami*), *'To Know God'* is one of the fundamental issues for Muslims. It is only after proving His existence that a Muslim can believe in His divine system of Law and Order. All other moral, spiritual and religious values are included in the essence of Tawheed (Oneness) of Allah (S.W.T.).

In order to understand Tawheed and be able to submit to Him, it becomes necessary for us all to undertake the spiritual journey towards *Imaan* (Faith) and *Taqwa* (Piety). A person might believe that this is a difficult path to walk on but it not impossible. All it requires is a strong urge to know the great Maker of the Universe!

We must remember that by learning the true Islam, we will be able to practise its valuable teachings. It is necessary for us to understand that if we want to reach perfection in both Imaan and *Amal-e-Saaleh* (Good Actions), we have to study the lives of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and Infallible Aimmah (a.s.).

In this book, each and every chapter is directed towards appreciating the deeper meaning of Tawheed (Absolute Oneness of Allah (S.W.T.)). The ideas and rules we will study are all ways in which to discover the truth and when we learn Akhlaaq (Moral Excellence) it is because our good conduct will allow us to reach out to other people around the world and call them back to the Truth.

We need to strive to have a deep understanding of our Lord. We also need to reflect upon the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Remember, our main aim in studying the following chapters is to *create a strong bond with Allah (S.W.T.)!*

May He make us all successful in this aim. *Ameen.*

LESSON 1

THE BEST OF LESSONS

My class teacher is one of the best teachers in our school. She is kind, friendly and has the most beautiful smile! She always makes sure that we understand what she is teaching and never gets angry no matter how many questions we ask! Mrs. Jawad is my favourite teacher!

Before she begins any lesson, Mrs. Jawad always recites *Bismillahir Rahmaan Rahim.* It is a verse from the Holy Qur'an meaning *'In the Name of Allah (S.W.T.), the Most Kind, the*

Most Merciful' and when we hear it reminds of our Creator and our purpose in studying. This makes it easier to concentrate and understand what she is teaching us. Isn't it amazing what strength one Holy verse can give us?

The other day, Mrs. Jawad asked us, "Children! Do you think it would be a good idea to study about ourselves?"

We all replied, "Yes!"

She smiled and told us, "Well then, let's go out and investigate the Human Body!"

How excited we were as we gathered our books, drawing papers and pencils! Soon we were set to go. As we walked out of the school gates, we met a builder and his crew at work. We greeted the men and then Mrs. Jawad drew our attention to the tall building next to our school and said, "Look at the building. See all the construction work? Come a little closer and see how the bricks stick to one another and form strong walls. Isn't it amazing? You can obviously see that the workmen are very skilled and the design must be that of a gifted architect. This is just an example of the talent it takes to plan and create anything. When the building is completed, it will look even better that it does today!"

As we were studying the building in a new light, she continued, "Did you ever think of your own bodies and how delicate everything inside you is? What about the various processes that go and the parts that work like big machines every second? Think about it for a moment…

"Can you remember the names of each and every organ of your body? Can you imagine the cells that are within your body? You all know that cells cannot be seen by our naked eyes, they can only be seen through a microscope because they are so tiny, and yet, they are so important that without them we would not be alive!

"My dears! Do you know how each cell works? Do you know that each one has its own unique shape and function? Yes! It does! The white blood cells and the red blood cells are different but at the same time, they work together in perfect harmony and do their task so well, it is mind-boggling!"

By now, we were all captivated by what she was saying and each one of us was straining to hear her soft voice above the noises from the construction site. Mrs. Jawad looked at all of us and asked, "Have you thought about the more complex systems in your body, like the nervous and digestive systems? Have you ever thought of how many muscles contract and expand in our bodies when we perform the simplest actions? How about the hundreds of messages that are sent to the brain all the time, which allow us to co-ordinate our actions so easily? *Sub'haana-Allah*! Glory belongs only to Allah (S.W.T.)!

"Isn't it really amazing how complex our bodies are and how they work! When you hurt yourself, the cells in your body immediately react to cure the wound!

"Therefore, dear children, what do you understand from all this? What do you learn from comparing the construction of the building with your bodily functions? Don't you think that just like the building there is a Master Planner behind the workings of your body? And is this Planner anyone other than the Supreme Creator who has designed everything – big and small - so perfectly in the universe?

"When we realise and appreciate Allah (S.W.T.)'s favours, then we understand that it is our duty to show obedience and gratitude to our Merciful Creator.

"Children! I am very happy that we had this lesson today. I hope what we have learnt will show you the importance of a Creator. Through such simple examples we can increase our faith and certainty in our Supreme Lord, *Insha Allah.*"

After this we all headed back to class filled with thoughts about the wonderful things Allah (S.W.T.) has created, most importantly, ourselves!

A Holy Verse

The Qur'an says:

"And in the earth are signs for those who are sure in conviction, and also in your ownselves; will you then not see? …"

Sura Zaariaat, Verses 20 & 21

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT …

1. We, as Allah (S.W.T.)'s creation, must try to learn about and investigate the human anatomy.
2. We need to find out more about the functions of various cells in our body.
3. As Muslims, it is our duty to Allah (S.W.T.) is to:
   a) Show thanks for His countless favours and
   b) Try to follow His divine path even in simple ways.

Think and Answer

1. Name the smallest organ in the human body.
2. Name 5 different body cells and describe their characteristics and functions.
3. How would you recognise your Creator from the examples discussed in the lesson?
4. What is our duty towards our Kind Lord?

ANECDOTE

FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE SUN

A young man once asked a Wise Teacher, "Why is it that the sun is so bright and charming and yet no one has ever fallen in love with it?"

The Wise Teacher replied: "It is because, it is seen every day in most places. Where it is not seen often, it is really loved and anxiously awaited."

LESSON 2

PERFECT HARMONY OF THE UNIVERSE IS A SIGN OF…?

My uncle Ali is a farmer. He loves his job and works tirelessly day and night on his land. *"Farming is the best of occupations,"* he often says.

It was a fine morning in spring, when my uncle asked us to join him and our Aunt Sarah for a picnic. Fatemah – my sister – and I were very excited to visit them at their farm. What an awesome sight! The flowers and the roses in full bloom were beautiful. The air was fresh, the sun was bright and the sky a clear, cloudless blue. Everything seemed perfect for our picnic that day.

Uncle Ali was sitting in the middle of their small garden preparing hot cocoa as we played around him when suddenly heavy, grey clouds appeared from nowhere! The sky turned dark and angry and it began to pour! By the time we managed to grab our things and rush to the cottage, we were totally drenched! What a drastic change in the weather!

Once in the cottage, we quickly changed into dry clothes and then stared out the window at the sheets of rain as they fell. We felt let down and began to complain about the storm that had ruined our picnic.

I went to sit next to Uncle Ali who was setting up the hot cocoa again and grumbled, "Uncle, why of all the days did it have to rain today?"

Fatemah, who was still at the window, turned when she heard my question. "Oh, Hassan! Why do you ask such silly questions! It's raining and our picnic is spoilt, what does it matter why it rained?"

Aunt Sarah came over and put her arm around Fatemah. "Don't worry, dear," she consoled her. "Be patient and I'm sure the storm will clear."

Uncle Ali then spoke again as he poured out the hot milk into four mugs. "In the meantime, why don't I answer the question you asked, Hassan? It was a very good one…"

We always enjoyed the stories that Uncle told us and so we huddled under the blankets Aunt Sarah brought and with mugs of steaming cocoa we settled down around him. He began:

"Children, tell me, do you think we would be able to get food, milk, vegetables, fruits and other things without rain on the earth? The wonderful rain makes the crops that we eat grow and also nourishes the plants that feed the animals. From the animals we then get meat, milk and the other products we use in our daily lives. What would happen to farms and cattle without rain? And what about drinking water? Without rain, we would have a difficult time finding water to

quench our thirsts with! Rain helps us to get the basic necessities of life, without which we would certainly die.”

“I can understand that we need rain.” I replied. “ But, why did it have to rain today when we had planned to play outside and have some fun?”

Uncle Ali smiled again, “ Hassan, that is the Will of Allah (S.W.T.). He knows best whether the land needed rain or not. Surely you couldn’t expect him to put off what others need just because of our fun? It is at times like this when He wants to see our patience and calmness.”

I realised how unreasonable I had been. Embarrassed, I looked at the floor. Suddenly, Fatemah asked, “Aunt Sarah, how does rain fall and where does it come from?”

I was interested in knowing this too, so both Fatemah and I listened quietly as Aunt Sarah explained the wonderful system of the water cycle. At the end she recited verse 164 of Sura Baqara that says:
"Verily in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alteration of night and day, and in the ships that sail in the sea with that which is of use to men, and in the water which Allah (S.W.T.) sends down from the skies thereby giving life to the earth after its death, and scattering therein (every kind of) animal, and in the changing of the winds and the clouds controlled for service between the heavens and the earth: surely there are signs (of Allah (S.W.T.)’s Rule) for the people who understand."

As we thought about the verse, we realised that Almighty God has designed this magnificent universe through His Power and Knowledge and He controls everything.

Uncle Ali was very happy to see that we were so interested in what he and Aunt Sarah had said. “Keep it up!” he told us. “You have been able to learn a lot of things today. Now you can understand that Allah (S.W.T.) works in mysterious ways, but always for the good of His creatures.”

We smiled at him and thanked him and Aunt Sarah for telling us all the amazing things they had.

“Look the sun is out again!” Fatemah exclaimed, pointing out the window. She was right! The rain had stopped and the sun was shining through the clouds that were already clearing up. So we were able to have our day out after all and lucky enough to have learnt more about Allah (S.W.T.) at the same time!

Alhamdulillah! Allah (S.W.T.) worked in a mysterious way to teach us more about Himself!

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. One of the most amazing things in the world is the water cycle. A simple explanation of the cycle is as follows:

   The sun heats the surfaces of large bodies of water and this cause evaporation to occur. When the warm air filled with this moisture rises up to the sky, it cools in the low temperatures there, forming what we call clouds. Winds normally blow these clouds inland and when the temperatures are low enough for the moisture to turn back into water, it falls to earth as rain. Some of this rain gives the soil important nutrients and revives the plants and the rest falls back into the oceans and rivers. Then the cycle begins again! Can you imagine what perfect planning is required to make sure that all these different forces of nature work in perfect harmony and co-ordination?

2. From the above we can see that Allah (S.W.T.) in His perfect Knowledge and Wisdom controls all the universal systems for the well being of His creations. This is why we need a Creator who is absolutely perfect and independent. Allah (S.W.T.)'s work is all in perfect balance.

3. Whatever is in the Heavens, and the Earth and other extra-terrestrial worlds, are the glorious signs of Allah (S.W.T.). We only need think about them to realise it. So next time, you find yourself looking at the world around you, stop for a few minutes and try to see Allah (S.W.T.)'s signature in the wonders you see!

Think and Answer

1. Give some examples of God's perfection and how He controls the world.
2. How can you learn and appreciate Allah (S.W.T.)'s Greatness?
3. Why did Uncle Ali have to explain to his niece and nephew about the formation of rain and its importance to the earth?
4. What do you understand from verse 164, Sura Baqara in the Holy Qur'an?
5. How does the above-mentioned verse show us Allah (S.W.T.)'s Power and Greatness?

Introduction to Chapter Two

In The Name Of Allah (S.W.T.), the Beneficent, the Merciful

MA'AD

The Life in the Hereafter

There is a great need for us to understand that human beings are created for a sacred goal in this world. This is the world for actions and it is our continuous purpose to try and understand the philosophy of this life.

Here are a few fundamental points that we must know to begin with:

1. We as human beings have not been created in vain and have a specific, sacred goal in life.
2. All other creations in this universe have been made for the purpose of serving human beings and also to beautify the awesome universe.
3. In this world, we have been given an opportunity to sow the seeds of good actions. Our harvest will follow in the life after death and the hereafter. All actions – whether good or bad – performed by human beings will receive their deserving compensation. The good deeds that one does will turn into beautiful rewards. On the other hand, when a person does anything bad he will obviously reap punishment in the life of the hereafter.

In this chapter, we will study about the nature and the need of the great event of the Day of Judgement. We will also familiarize ourselves with what Allah (S.W.T.)'s plan for this Day is. By knowing, appreciating and fully understanding the holy aims of Allah (S.W.T.), we will be better equipped to serve Him in the best possible manner.

In our discussion, we will study the meaning of death and the concept of S*hahaadat* (Martyrdom). Are they different names for the same thing? Hardly! Martyrdom is a most noble choice made by those who wish to taste the sweetness of *Shahaadat.*

Through all this, we will see that those who work hard in this life and try to do good will definitely see the results of their efforts. One may not see the fruits immediately but it is important to fully trust Allah (S.W.T.) and place our hope and confidence in Him.

Finally, we will read parts of the "*Will of a Martyr*". In this, we will see how a martyr prepares himself to remain firm and take up all sorts of challenges just to gain the nearness of Allah (S.W.T.).

LESSON 3
HARVEST PERIOD

Summer was leaving and the warm colours and chill breezes told us that autumn was around the corner. The week before school opened, Uncle Ali invited us to join him on his farm for the long weekend.

We started our journey early in the morning. By the time we reached the orchards, the sun was high and bright and the sky was clear. As we walked past the trees towards the cottage, we could see large, ripe apples ready for picking. The other trees in the distance looked equally heavy with healthy fruit.

Uncle Ali had seen us arrive and he opened the door before we even had a chance to knock. "Welcome!" he said heartily. "I see you are nice and early."

After the usual greetings and hugs, we settled down to breakfast all together. Aunt Sarah set down a large tray, full of fresh, rosy red apples, on the table and then went to fetch the tea. Uncle Ali smiled warmly at all of us and then gestured towards the fruit. "I thank Allah (S.W.T.) for accepting my hard work and rewarding me with good results this year. The trees in the orchards are full of similar colourful gifts from the Almighty." Then he looked at Fatemah and me and asked, "Do you remember the last time you came over in spring? Do you remember how annoyed and upset you were because of the sudden rain? Well, I am sure you have realised that if it hadn't rained during last spring, we wouldn't have seen our plants grow and our trees wouldn't have had such lovely fruits. When you eat and enjoy the juicy apples, let it remind you of the rains!"

We nodded as we reached out for an apple each. Neither of us had forgotten what Uncle and Aunt had taught us that day and we hoped we would get a chance to learn something new on this visit too.

As we munched on our apples and waited for the tea, Uncle Ali gave us some magazines to read. We pored over them while he and Daddy talked. I was going through one of the magazines when I came across a page that read: ' *The Will of a Martyr'*.

I was reading the article and did not notice that Aunt Sarah had brought the tea. Seeing how engrossed I was in the magazine, she called out "What are you reading, Hassan? Why don't you read it aloud to us."

"It is a very interesting article about martyrdom," I replied. "This is how it begins: *'And do not think those who are slain in the way of Allah (S.W.T.) are dead, nay, they are alive and Allah (S.W.T.) sustains them…'* That is an ayat from the Holy Qur'an, isn't it?" I asked after quoting the verse.

"Yes, it is," my aunt agreed. "What else does the article say?"

"Well, it is a Martyr's will that he left behind for his mother. It is too long to read out entirely but I liked one particular paragraph," I answered. "Listen to this :
'… How beautiful it is to become a Shaheed in the way of Allah (S.W.T.). Its fragrance is like a tulip. Yes! It is indeed a road of resistance and patience in defending Islam and its enemies. One may become a Shaheed by seeking God's guidance and the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. In case I am blessed with such an honourable status - that of a shaheed - my deepest congratulations will be to my beloved mother as it is she who taught me and encouraged me to follow that sublime path. Indeed! I shall be received as a special guest of Allah (S.W.T.).'"

There was a moment of silence when I finished reading out the passage. How beautiful it sounded and what confidence the Martyr had in Allah (S.W.T.). Rather than sounding scared of what was to face him, the Martyr spoke with eagerness to meet this fate! I wondered at his attitude.

Even as we sat down to eat, thoughts about what I had read kept running through my mind. Finally, when we had eaten and my mother and aunt were in the kitchen, I sat down near Uncle Ali. Seeing that he was not very busy, I asked him softly, "Uncle! I have been thinking during breakfast. Tell me, how does a person attain martyrdom and seek Allah (S.W.T.)'s pleasure in the way of Islam?"

My Uncle looked intently at me. "Hassan, in order to find an answer to that, you must first ask yourself some important questions. Ask yourself, who are you? Why were you born? What is the purpose of this life? Why do you have to work so hard in this world and expect the results much later, that is, in the Aakhera? Why has Allah (S.W.T.) created some things that the naked eye can see and others that cannot be seen nor perceived?"

He paused for a while to let the questions sink. Then he continued, "Allah (S.W.T.) has created all these things – seen and unseen – so that as human beings, we may benefit from them not only physically but also spiritually because they remind us of His Blessings and allow us to realise His Greatness.

"When we understand what a Magnificent Creator He is, we then seek nearness to Him and want to please Him because He deserves to be pleased. This makes us prepare more eagerly for death and the life after death.

"You see, Death is the next stage of life, leading us to another world, which is eternal. Do you think that all our actions and good deeds in this world will go in vain? Aren't we going to earn the fruits of our hard work in the next world? Doesn't this encourage us to find out more about death itself? For a true believer, the life after death is the best place since it allows him to be closer to Allah (S.W.T.), which is his dearest wish. This is why he looks forward to it so much."

As Uncle Ali finished speaking, I finally understood why the Martyr sounded so happy and confident. Fatemah who had also been listening came up and tugged at Uncle's sleeve. " But Uncle! What exactly is *Martyrdom*?" she asked.

"What an excellent question!" Uncle exclaimed smiling as he lifted her up on his lap. "My dear Fatemah, *Shahaadat* – which is the Arabic word for Martyrdom – in its true sense means '*to give away one's life for the pleasure of the Creator*'. A person who chooses to face all the difficulties that come his way and fights against the enemies till the last moments of his life is a 'shaheed'.

"A martyr is a person who knowingly walks on the path towards death with a deep love for Allah (S.W.T.) and yearning to meet with His Lord. A shaheed looks forward to achieving the highest stage of shahadah. Paradise (Jannah) waits for such people and they will keep the company of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and Aimmah (a.s.) in the hereafter.

"We need to remind ourselves from time to time that this world is for performing our good deeds. Our actions should be such that our Creator, Allah (S.W.T.), is proud of and happy with us. Remember that only those who work sincerely for His sake and thank Him for His countless blessings will be rewarded! We must be careful of our deeds and stay away from forbidden acts that displease Him.

"When we all rise and face accounting on *Yawmul-Hisaab* – the Day of Judgement – it will be a terrible time! That day will be equivalent to 50,000 years! Those of us who had been good in this world will be happy on that day but those who had been bad will curse themselves then!"

"Oh!" cried Fatemah. "Then I am going to try and be the best girl!"

"That is wonderful to hear!" Uncle smiled. " Now, let us go and enjoy the fresh air and pick some apples for you to take home!"

Aunt Sarah and Mummy joined as we all walked out to the orchards to pick fruit. As we walked Uncle advised us saying, "Always keep alert to the Glory of Allah (S.W.T.) because He has said in the Holy Qur'an:
"The sun, the moon, the planets are all in motion, O men! Then wake up from the deep sleep of negligence."

A Holy Verse
The Qur'an says:
"Every soul shall taste death, and then they will return back to us."

Sura Ankabut, Verse 57

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…
1. Our Almighty Lord, Allah (S.W.T.), is the Creator of everything: big, tiny or even microscopic. Not only that, He created even those things that the human being cannot see! He is the Maker, the Planner and the Creator. All this, He has created for a purpose.
2. Human beings, in particular, have been created to seek obedience from Allah (S.W.T.) and to follow His chosen path. This world is the place for putting our total faith in Him and performing actions that would please our

Lord, the hereafter is the eternal world for getting our rewards or punishment according to what we did.

Think and Answer

1. Pretend that you are trying to relate what you have just read to a friend. Explain Uncle Ali's discussion about Shahadah and the hereafter with the children.
2. Why do you think we have to wait for so long to get the results of our actions i.e. until the Day of Judgement?
3. What are the wonderful blessings of God in the hereafter, and who would deserves these blessings?
4. What is the status of a shaheed in this world and the next?
5. *This world is the passageway for the next world.* What does this mean?

LESSON 4

TRANSITION TO THE NEXT WORLD

We send heartiest greetings and salutations to those who have attained the glory of martyrdom in the way of Islam! They have been examples for us, showing us the way to Freedom, Faith, Love and Adoration for the true Islam. They remained steadfast to the end and were strong enough to keep up the dignity of Islam. A shaheed reminds us of the life after death – which is indeed the eternal life.

Let us look at a brief text written by a shaheed who embraced martyrdom during the early days of the Imposed war on the Islamic Republic of Iran. Read his words carefully and try to reflect on how he saw Shahaadah. He wrote:

"A human being comes to this world once and leaves this world once and that is for eternity! So why fear death? Why shouldn't one prepare oneself for death?

"Dear mother, shahaadah is another life-giving life. A shaheed gives a new, fresh spirit to Islam. Death is not an end to life but it is just a transfer to the next world, which is everlasting.

"Remind yourselves! One does not perish with death; rather it is another chapter to the real life.

"My beloved mother! Don't be afraid of death! A shaheed receives his continuous sustenance from the Merciful Lord and enjoys His blessings.

"I hope and pray that I attain this most beautiful status of shahaadah and may my wish of becoming a shaheed be fulfilled and may my Lord accept me."

Such were the words of the shaheed. Look at how he longs to taste the sweetness of Martyrdom! This is the spirit and true commitment in attaining *shahaadah* in Islam. Death is a natural and inevitable conclusion to life. It is the duty of a Muslim to understand this and accept it positively instead of looking at it as an ending.

There have been numerous traditions from our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and Aimmah (a.s.) regarding this important subject. From them we know that death is a different experience for each and every individual.

If a person is much attached to worldly pleasures and materialism and has forgotten why he was created in the first place, his experience of death will of course be very different from someone who has a understood the purpose of life and become an obedient servant of Allah (S.W.T.).

There remains no doubt in anyone's mind that a non-believer will face a death that will be full of misery, torture and despair. Those who do not obey the commands of Allah (S.W.T.) and do not believe in Him will suffer because they

will be unable to give up the pleasures of this world. It will be very hard for them to leave its amusements.

Unlike the Kafir, a Mo'meens' death will be the complete opposite. For him, tasting death will be like removing old, shabby clothes and wearing new, beautiful ones. Because, he truly believed in the unseen world and remained faithful to Allah (S.W.T.) and His prophets, the Believer will gracefully enter Jannah. He will have finally achieved his wish to embrace the sweetness of death and meet with his Lord.

FOLLOWERS OF THE HEREAFTER

The Believers are those who love Allah (S.W.T.), accept His true message and seek His obedience and pleasure. They remain patient and steadfast in their deeds in order to accumulate their good deeds.

They choose to remain pure as the servants of Allah (S.W.T.) and they worship and serve Him alone. They live simple lives and prefer not to indulge in materialistic activities and worldly temptations. They accept all difficulties that come their way and all sorts of hardships just for His sake.

On the eve of Ashura (10th Muharram), our 3rd Holy Imam Hussayn (a.s.) said:
"Oh my beloved friends, Oh You who have been exalted with a high status in faith and piety! Perform Jehad against the enemies and in defence of Islam and its divine values. I remind you that death is a bridge and transition to the next world. Is there anyone who does not want to free himself from remaining prisoners of this world? Rise above all and gain His acceptance. Death is indeed a garden for freedom seekers, surely the lovers of this world are indeed the lovers of being imprisoned."

Our 4th Holy Imam, al-Sajjad (a.s.) says:
"Death for a believer is like wearing beautiful clothes and removal of dirty clothes, thus removing all chains from the body.

"Death for a believer is a means to the most exalted abode, but for a Kafir, it is like wearing the dirtiest clothes and entering the wildest of places.

"It is a prestigious and honourable thing for believers."

A Holy Verse

The Qur'an reminds us all about death saying:
"Every soul shall taste death; We try you with evil and with good (by way of) a test; and unto Us shall you (all) be returned."

Sura Ambiya, Verse 35

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. Death is a natural course of action, not an ending to life, but a journey to a new life.

2. The taste of death and its after effects for a non-believer is scary and dangerous.
3. The taste of death and its after effects for a believer is sublime, joyous and a beautiful experience.

Think and Answer

1. Do all people taste death and its aftermath in the same way?
2. Why is death difficult for some and easy for others?
3. What was the message of Imam Hussayn (a.s.) on the eve of Ashura?
4. Why do believers not fear Death?
5. What prevents a strong Mo'meen (Believer) from humiliating himself for the sake of worldly gains and pleasures?

ANECDOTE

PRAYER OF THE PIOUS

A famous prayer of Abdul Qadir Jeelani (a man of great learning) is as follows :

"Spare and pardon me, O Allah (S.W.T.)! And if I deserve punishment, cause me to arise blind on the Day of Judgement so that I might not be ashamed to face other righteous men. Every morning after dawn, with my face on earth, I pray to You, O Almighty. O Allah (S.W.T.), I can never forget You. Please do remember me."

Introduction to Chapter Three

In The Name Of Allah (S.W.T.), the Beneficent, the Merciful

NUBUWWAH

Seeking guidance from our Noble Prophets

When we travel to another city or country, we need to follow many rules and regulations before we can undertake our journey. Depending on our destination, we sometimes need a passport and at other times a visa. We also have to have vaccinations, health checks and ensure that our documents are in order according to the travel laws of the country we want to go to.

If we need laws and regulations just to go from place in this world to another, does it not make sense that we should also need a special set of rules for travelling to the next world? Just as in this world, a travel agent is trained to explain the rules to us, Allah (S.W.T.) has also trained a special set of people who were sent to teach us the laws for travelling to the hereafter. These are individuals who are familiar with the both the journey to the Aakhera and with the hereafter itself.

You must already have realised that we are talking about the numerous Prophets that Allah (S.W.T.) through His Mercy and Kindness sent to the different nations and tribes of the earth.

In this chapter, we hope to learn more about the need for the prophets that have been sent to us by Allah (S.W.T.). After having studied the important aims of these prophets, we shall then try to look at some of their teachings. We will also talk of the important aspect of leadership in Islam.

We must be willing to search for the difference between truth and falsehood as it is through such an aim that we will be able to give our commitment to the prophets sent by God. These prophets were sent to show mankind the path of truth i.e. Tawheed (Oneness of God) and to fight against falsehood i.e. Jahalat (Ignorance).

If we study the histories of previous societies, we will realise that those people who had absolutely no belief in One God and worshipped idols failed to build up morally sound communities. They had lost the essence of life and remained ignorant of the right path. It is for this reason, amongst many others, that the need for Ambiya and Aimmah (a.s.) as our perfect guides, arose in the world.

LESSON 5

A LESSON ON THE PEAK OF THE MOUNTAIN

We were all sitting on the steps outside the front entrance to the school. The mid term holiday stretched out in front of us and everyone had an idea on how to best spend it. Suddenly we hit on the perfect plan! Mountain climbing! There were some wonderful peaks to climbing just a few hours out of town and it was something none of us had done before. We all agreed that we definitely wanted to try it out but there were many questions in all of our minds. How would we go? Would it really be possible? What if we failed?

As we sat and discussed it, we managed to find solutions to all the problems except for one. “We can attempt it for sure,” Baqir said. “But we need an experienced guide for this adventure, so that we can make it to the top of the mountain! Where can we get such a person?"

While some of the group nodded in agreement, I protested, “Why do we need a guide? We are strong and capable. We’ll just make sure we carry all the necessities and a clear map for directions. Besides we see documentaries all the time and it doesn’t look so difficult. Why can’t we reach the top without a guide?"

Baqir’s face fell at my words, “I’m surprised at your attitude, Hassan!” he said. “You are greatly mistaken if you think mountain climbing is an easy task. We know nothing about it – neither the roads nor the skills! What guarantee do we have that we will reach the top on our own? What happens if we have a problem? Imagine if we were caught halfway by a strong wind or a hurricane? Did you ever think what would happen if we got lost?"

“What Baqir says makes sense,” Fatema said, “at the same time, I really want to see the peak of a mountain for myself and not just on the T.V. screen or in a photograph! I don’t want to miss out on that just because we can’t get a guide.”

After that, everyone had something to say either for or against the idea and by the time we headed for home, we still had not come to any decision. Luck was on our side though and the following day, Hussein rang me up to tell me that he had the perfect solution. Apparently his father had a lot of experience in mountain climbing expeditions and had agreed to be our guide for the trip. I quickly called Baqir and the others and we arranged to meet that afternoon at Hussein’s house to plan for the trip.

By three o’clock we were all seated in sitting room of Hussein’s house eager to get started. Hussein introduced us to his father – Uncle Mustafa – and we waited him to speak. “I understand that you would like to go mountain-climbing tomorrow,” he said. We nodded our heads in reply. He smiled and asked us, “What measures and preparations you have made for the trip?”

As he waited for an answer, we looked at each other sheepishly. What amateurs we were! We wanted to undertake an adventure but hadn't even begun planning for it!

As Uncle Mustafa explained what we would need, we began to realise how different his advice sounded from the ideas we had in our minds. We decided that we would all start the journey at 4:00 a.m. the following morning. We were to go home and pack some warm clothes, hot drinks, lots of dried and canned food, dates and a First Aid kit, each.

The next morning, most of us reached Hussein's place before dawn and we prayed Salaatus-Subh together. By four o'clock, everyone was present and it was time to leave. As we drove to the mountainside, Uncle Mustafa went through all the climbing rules and emergency codes with us. He emphasized that we would have to be extremely disciplined if we wanted to make this trip a success.

In a couple of hours we reached the mountains and a beautiful sight greeted us! The high snow-capped mountains were bathed in the rosy hues of the early morning sun. It was awesome and we stopped for a while just to admire the beauty of the scene. The fresh air energized us and after having a quick breakfast, we finally began our big adventure!

What hard work it was! Sometimes we would be walking upright along the sloping paths on the mountain and at other we would have to be extremely careful and follow Uncle Mustafa's directions and he searched for stable footholds to pull ourselves up with. I had lost all track of time and when Uncle Mustafa announced that it was almost time for *Dhohr*, I was astonished! When we reached a small ledge, we all stopped and unloaded our baggage. I hadn't realised how heavy my bag was until I shrugged it off and felt my shoulders lighten. Looking around and seeing the others with similar looks of relief on their faces, I grinned. It seemed that Baqir had been right after all! As I heard Uncle Mustafa's steady voice giving instructions, I tried to imagine what it would have been like if we would have been there all alone without him. I didn't like the image that came to my mind and quickly pushed it away, silently thanking Allah (S.W.T.) for preventing us from making such a mistake.

We performed wudhoo with extremely cold water, which helped to energize us and after Salaat, our rumbling stomachs led us straight to the food. Uncle Mustafa had built a small fire and set our food to simmer over it while we prayed so that by the time we were ready for the meal, the food was deliciously warm! The fare was simple – just soup with bread and cheese – but it tasted better than anything I had eaten. When I mentioned this, everyone agreed with me and Uncle Mustafa laughed saying that it was the fresh air and exercise that made the food taste good. I declared that I would make sure I spent more time in the fresh air if it had such good effects and that made everyone laugh.

After lunch, Uncle Mustafa said that we could rest for a few more minutes before continuing our climb. The food and excellent company had filled me with a warmth and I settled down with my back against the mountain, looking around. We were almost half way up and the sight around us was amazing! It was like being suspended in mid air. I could look down on the peaks of some of the smaller mountains and yet others rose up

higher than even the one we were on. What majesty and beauty surrounded us! I could not help remembering Allah (S.W.T.), who had created all this and to whom even these great giants bowed in submission! My heart filled with love and joy for Him.

All too soon, Uncle Mustafa called out to us to begin and I reluctantly pulled myself away from my view. All of the sudden, I didn’t want to climb any higher. What could be more beautiful than what I had already seen? I spoke to Uncle Mustafa as we began out ascent. He smiled and patted me on the shoulder. “I’ll ask you that same question when we reach the top!” he said.

As the evening progressed, we all became more and more weary. It took all our concentration to keep our feet on the ground and move forward. It seemed to me as if the mountain rose endlessly above us and I despaired of ever reaching the top. When Baqir slipped and almost fell. Uncle Mustafa made us pause and spoke firmly. “ I know you are all tired but you must all be very careful as one mistake on your part could put all the rest in danger as well. Come on, remember how excited you were when we began the climb? Keep that enthusiasm in mind. It’s not far and with the help of Allah (S.W.T.) we shall soon be at the peak.”

His words encouraged us and as we started climbing with renewed energy, our eagerness caught on and the air was tense with excitement. Suddenly, we heard Uncle Mustafa cry out “Allaho Akbar!” and we knew he had finally reached the top. Urging each other forward we scrambled up as fast as we could and were pulled, one after the other, up the final ridge by his strong hand.

I dropped my bag, tired beyond belief and took a deep breath. Then I opened my eyes and froze at the sight that greeted me. Mountain peaks covered in blankets of white, were spread all around us, rising up from the clouds like islands in a pale sea. The rays of the setting sun on the snow made the most fascinating plays of light. Now the mountains seemed bathed in a gentle pink light, then they began to glow slightly in a golden-orange hue and suddenly they blazed in a fiery red furnace. Spellbound, I could not tear my eyes away from the scene and from the silence around me, I knew the others were going through a similar experience. I felt a hand on my shoulder and Uncle Mustafa’s voice spoke softly in my ear. “Well, Hassan, what do you have to say now?”

I continued to look at the majestic view and searched for words to answer him. I could find only one. “Mashallah!” I whispered.

“Truly, there is no better answer.” Uncle Mustafa replied.

Uncle Mustafa then turned to the others and said, “Why don’t we all recite a loud Salawaat to celebrate our victory?”

We willingly complied with his request, shouting it out at the top of our lungs. As the last words left our lips, I wondered at how perfectly fitting it sounded to hear the name of our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) echo in the midst of the gigantic mountains.

We ate a quiet supper, watching the sunset and talking in soft tones until the time for *Maghrib* when we all performed wudhoo and stood together to pray. By the time we finished *Isha*, we wanted to do nothing more than sleep. Spreading out our sleeping bags we were all dead to the world in seconds! The last thing I remember before drifting of myself is the image of Uncle Mustafa with a mug of steaming tea in his hands softly reciting tasbeeh.

It felt like we had only slept a few minutes before we heard Uncle Mustafa giving Adhaan to wake us up for Salaatu-Subh. Bleary-eyed, we dragged ourselves out of our warm bags and performed wudhoo with the water that was now almost ice cold. It had the good effect of jolting us awake and by the time we finished praying, none of us felt like going back to sleep.

Uncle Mustafa took this opportunity to talk to us. "Well, children, Let us thank Allah (S.W.T.) that we were successful in achieving our aim. I must congratulate all of you for your bravery and discipline! It was your first attempt at climbing but you have made it. Let me ask you now, do you think you could have managed on your own?"

"Of course not!" We all protested.

"If you hadn't been our guide we would have failed in even the first step! We would never have reached the top!" Baqir said.

"We might have been lost …" I added.

"…or slipped and broken our bones …" Fatema joined.

" …or monsters might have eaten us…" Hussein cried.

"I hardly think there are monsters in these mountains!" Uncle Mustafa laughed and he became serious and continued, "but you are all right in your answers, without a guide who knew about the task you wanted to undertake, you would not have succeeded. Look around and you will see that we have guides in every journey or trip we undertake. We also have guides in school and in madrassah."

He stopped to make sure we were listening and seeing that he had our full attention he asked. "Children! What do you think is the most important journey you will ever undertake?" There was silence, as we thought about his question.

"I think the most important journey is our life. It is the journey to the hereafter," volunteered Fatemah timidly.

"That is perfectly right!" exclaimed Uncle Mustafa, looking very pleased. "And when we as human beings understand the need for and provide guides in our daily worldly activities, does it make sense that Allah (S.W.T.), Who is perfect should not provide guides for the greatest journey He created for us?

"Of course He has! The prophets who were sent by Allah (S.W.T.) to show us the path towards perfection are these very same guides. Although they encountered many hardships and difficulties, they delivered the message of Allah (S.W.T.).

"They taught us that as Muslims, if we are to be successful in this journey, there are 3 crucial things we must achieve: *Faith, Taqwa and Good Deeds*

"If we have the strong faith in Allah (S.W.T.), become God-conscious (taqwa) and perform good deeds, we will see the results of our actions in the form of great rewards from the Almighty.

"But if we fall into the trap of disbelief and mischief, the results will surely be severe punishment from Him. In preparing for this journey, we must be very careful of our actions. Just as we were so careful in trying not to slip as we climbed the mountain yesterday, we must take care not to slip in our actions either. Falling off the side of the mountain would have injured our bodies but falling from the Truth injures our souls which is worse."

I tried imagining falling off the mountain and remembered the fear I had felt when Baqir had slipped. I had never felt like that when I sinned and I was ashamed of myself. I told myself that from that point onwards whenever I was tempted to do wrong, I would bring up that image to remind myself of what Uncle Mustafa had said.

We talked a little more about the various prophets that Allah (S.W.T.) had sent down until the morning had dawned completely. Then we packed our things and taking one final look at the view that would always remain in our hearts, we started making our way down the mountain.

We all agreed that it had been a wonderful trip. Not only had we learnt a lot about climbing but surprisingly we had also managed to learn about Allah (S.W.T.) and Islam. How easy it was to find Allah (S.W.T.)'s message in everything – all it took was the desire to look for it!

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT …

1. As imperfect human beings, we need perfect guides to show us the path to the eternal world. In order to journey on the road to the Aakhera, we need to follow a special programme that has been brought by the chosen ones of Allah (S.W.T.).
2. These chosen individuals can be none other than the infallible Prophets who are aware of the requirements of human beings in reaching perfection.
3. Men who accept the leadership of the prophets and Aimmah (a.s.) will gain eternal bliss and nearness to Allah (S.W.T.).

Think and Answer

1. What is the most sacred journey in this world?
2. How can the Prophets help in this journey? Give a practical example.

3. In what ways can we remain safe on the road to the hereafter?
4. What provisions have *you* made for this special trip?

LESSON 6

PROPHETS: The only Perfect Guides on the Secret Journey.

We all know that we are alive and that the time spent between our birth and death is our life. But do we know the purpose for this period called *life* ? Do we have the knowledge of the unseen? Or were we born with the guidelines that are required on this journey? The answer to these questions is quite obviously, No. If we knew these things naturally then we would not be having all the problems we do and the most asked question in the world would not be "Why are we here?"

Having established that we are *not* born with this knowledge, the next most natural question would be 'Who then, is there to show us the way and teach us the things we need to know?'

To better understand this let us take the example of Jameel. Jameel is at point A and wants to reach point B a certain distance away. He has never been there and has the choice of number of different roads to take. He also knows that one of those many roads is slightly longer but it is the safest and would allow him to reach his destination without any problems. The question is, how is he to know which road that is? Who can guide him in his choice? Does it not make sense that it would have to be someone who knows the roads and is familiar with them?

In the same way, our prophets are chosen, trained and taught by Allah (S.W.T.) so that they are familiar with the road to the Aakhera. Having this knowledge and being travellers on the same path, they are the only people capable of answering our questions and removing our doubts.

Allah (S.W.T.) has created this universe in the most perfect way. There is no disorder in it and even scientists who do not want to believe in a God are forced to admit that they cannot explain how the universe works in such an orderly fashion! Can you imagine a perfect well-designed world without any perfect guides to show us around? Living without the Mercy and Guidance Allah (S.W.T.) is like living in total darkness!

Allah (S.W.T.) in His absolute Wisdom created human beings for a very noble aim in life. We should understand that, it is we who need Allah (S.W.T.) and not the other way around. Knowing this, He, in His Mercy, sent down the prophets to help us fulfill this need. These prophets convey Allah (S.W.T.)'s divine message and give us guidelines on how to succeed in this world *and* in the hereafter.

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHETS

The prophets who are sent down come as spiritual guides. They can do this because they are already aware of the secret path. They have already proven themselves worthy of this status through their total submission and obedience to

Allah (S.W.T.). Because they have maintained purity and protected themselves from sin, they are known as *Ma'soom* (infallible ones).

The divine revelation – *WAHY* – comes down to them from Allah (S.W.T.), while they deliver His message to the people.

As we have mentioned throughout, prophets are chosen by the Merciful Creator. They are the 'Living Qur'an' for they showed total devotion to the divine system and implement its laws in the most perfect manner. Hence, they become our role models.

DA'WAH OF PROPHETS

Since the beginning of creation, prophets came to safeguard the school of Monotheism *(Tawheed*). As young children, you must have read numerous stories about the various prophets since the creation of Prophet Adam (a.s.).

Prophets were just like the human beings. They lived amongst the people and in the community. But the important point to mention is that no matter what community they were sent to they lived their lives according to the message of Absolute Oneness of Allah (S.W.T.). This was to show that Islam – as a way of life – suits all times and all communities.

Through their actions, they were able to show mankind the path to worshipping Him alone. Through their total love and commitment to Him, they attracted others to seek a similar path.

The human soul has a natural desire to love Good and Truth. Deep inside every person's mind is the urge to seek the right path. In order to successfully achieve this quest, it was necessary for prophets to act as Beacons of Guidance lighting the way for us.

As we look at their lives we will realise that despite all the struggles and hardships they faced, they always conveyed the message of truth against falsehood. In the past nations and tribes, the greatest forces of Evil were *Shirk* (Polytheism), *Kufr* (Disbelief), *Dhulm* (Injustice) and *Fasaad* (Corruption). All these united in one form – *The Violation of Human Rights.* To date, such evil forces prevail and require constant fighting against.

Akhlaq or 'Moral Excellence' was what the prophets basically practised. The people they were sent to were attracted to their message through their manners. In particular, our Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) was the perfect example of akhlaq. He was also known as *USWATUN HASANAH* (The Best Example).

NUMBER OF PROPHETS

The first Prophet who came down on the face of this earth was Prophet Adam (a.s.) and the last was the Seal of Prophethood - our Holy Prophet Muhammad Ibn Abdullah (s.a.w.w.).

Allah (S.W.T.) in His Mercy and Kindness sent down 124,000 Prophets for the salvation of human beings. They served various tribes, nations, groups of people and communities. Finally, a universal message came to complete this divine mission. This was during the time of our last Prophet who was sent as the 'Mercy to the Universe'.

Each and every prophet from the 124,000 prophets was allocated for a certain period of time to a particular village, or tribe. Sometimes there was more than one prophet on the earth but in different areas.

Among the many, a few were given heavenly books and divine laws to impart and implement. According to our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) there were a total number of 104 heavenly books.

Some prophets brought the Divine Laws (*sheriat*) to the people, while others revised the previous laws that had come down.

There is a special group of prophets who are called the *'Ulool-Adham'* Prophets, well known for the special laws they conveyed. They are the following:

- **Prophet Nuh (a.s.)**
- **Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.)**
- **Prophet Musa (a.s.)**
- **Prophet Issa (a.s.)**
- **Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.)**

AKHLAQ OF AMBIYAH

As Muslims who accept the prophets sent by the Almighty, we must respect and appreciate the sacrifices they have made to bring the true Message to us.

It is our duty to imitate them and follow their instructions and take lessons from their stories. Lives of prophets such as Musa (a.s.) and Issa (a.s.) teach us how to resist the environment of Kufr in all times. In both their cases, they were challenged with extreme difficulties during the course of conveying the message of Allah (S.W.T.).

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. Allah (S.W.T.), the Creator of the Universe sent down a divine system and to teach us that divine system, He sent down the prophets. The prophets were the carriers of His heavenly message.
2. Prophets brought a special programme for human beings. Through their teachings, people became familiar with the right path – that of submission and total devotion to Allah (S.W.T.). The core element in their teachings was the training of the *Nafs* (Soul) in order to know Allah (S.W.T.). They resisted all sorts of mischief and various forms of tyranny, impurity, disbelief, injustice and polytheism to bring this programme to us.

Think and Answer

1. The perfect system in the universe is a sign of what thing?
2. Why can only Allah (S.W.T.) choose perfect guides and a special divine system while we, as human beings, cannot do so?
3. Describe the characteristics of prophets?
4. When did the heavenly call of prophets begin?
5. What were the goals of all prophets?
6. Who are the ULOOL-ADHM prophets?
7. How can one show belief in and respect towards prophets? (Try to analyze this and give an answer based on your own opinions.)

LESSON 7

IF YOU DO NOT VALUE ALLAH (S.W.T.)'S BLESSINGS…

Have you ever heard of YEMEN? We are told in our history that long before the time of our Holy Prophet, a tribe called 'The Children of Saba' occupied this land. They lived in a beautiful city with excellent houses and an advanced system of roads. Allah (S.W.T.) had blessed them with a pleasant climate, rich soils and plenty of fresh water so that their orchards were always full of fresh fruit and beautiful flowers added colour to their gardens.

The *Qawm* (Tribe) of SABA were aware of the favours and blessings of Allah (S.W.T.) on them and appreciated His Mercy. The people worked very hard to develop their city and the most common occupation was farming. They were very kind, loyal and lived with peace, dignity and honour. Due to these good habits, equality and justice prevailed.

As time passed however, the people started taking their gifts for granted. Slowly, they began to forget that it was Allah (S.W.T.)'s Kindness that gave them all they had. They got so involved in worldly pleasures that they abandoned all Islamic values and forgot their purpose in life. As their sins grew in quantity, they became immersed kufr and forgot Allah (S.W.T.) completely!

GUIDANCE FROM PROPHETS

This is an excellent instance of why we need Prophets to guide us. Without a guide, the people of Saba had lost their perspective and turned from God-fearing individuals to idol-worshippers! Thus, Allah (S.W.T.) sent down a man to guide the tribe back to Him - this was *Prophet Saleh (a.s.).*

He struggled very hard for many days and nights to guide Qawm-e-Saba but his efforts were in vain. At one time, he addressed the nation:

"O people! Value the blessings that are available and around you. Adopt piety and belief in One God, seek guidance from me and use it in your daily lives. Be just and work hard!

"O people, if you do not follow the right path and continue in your ways - drowned in sins - in the end, you will face great loss and will be answerable to your Lord.

"O people do not busy your selves in mundane activities - eating and drinking and involving yourselves in the worldly desires. Don't you realise that you have a much higher goal in life? Remember that the life in the hereafter is everlasting so do not be negligent. Be conscious and protect yourselves from the worldly attractions and temptations, avoid carelessness and selfishness. Rid yourselves of laziness in worshipping Him.

"Stop living in self-centredness and self-indulgence! Know your Lord, so that you may attain happiness. Be God-Conscious! Do not envy others; appreciate the blessings of the

Lord of the Universe. O people, why do you remain so negligent of your deeds, why have you turned away from Tawheed?"

How shameful it was that these people who had known the truth had turned so completely against it! And what a pity that they had willingly chosen to enjoy pleasures in this temporary world rather than eternal happiness in the next!

When they refused to listen to the prophet, Allah (S.W.T.) sent down a great A*dhaab* (Punishment) on them that has served as a lesson to all times since, including us. All their worldly effort, in constructing huge buildings and farms, was destroyed by heavy floods. Most certainly the wrath of Allah (S.W.T.) had befallen them!

Now think about us today? Do we justly appreciate all that we get as blessings from our Merciful Creator? Do we follow His commands or are we negligent like the people of Saba? How many of us perform AMR BIL MAAROOF and NAHY ANIL MUNKAR? Do such practices even exist anymore within our Muslim communities?

The punishment for our ungratefulness may not come to us in this world as it did with the people of Saba but it will surely await us in the hereafter, which is worse in its tortures.

A Holy Verse

The Qur'an says:
" There was indeed a sign for the children of Saba in their dwelling-place: two gardens on the right and the left; (and it was said unto them) 'Eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks unto him', a good land (it was, in this world) and (God is the) Lord oft-forgiving! …"

Sura Saba, Verse 15

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. A Muslim must show obedience to Allah (S.W.T.) and His eternal message. We have to try to adopt *Taqwa*, which actually means to remain God-conscious at all times. The best way to do this is to seek guidance from prophets.
2. In one of his sermons to the people, Prophet Saleh (a.s.) told them, *'O people! Do not indulge yourselves in food and drinks; you have a higher goal in life, remind yourselves of the hereafter. O people! Why aren't you combating evil and refraining from sins …?'* How can we adopt this important message?

Think and Answer

1. How would you describe the people of SABA?
2. What was their prophet's message to them?
3. Why do you think they choose not to listen to the wise counsel of the prophet of their time?

4. What lessons can we derive from the events that unfolded with the QAWME SABA? Explain your answer in detail.

ANECDOTE
THE FIRE AND THE FIREWOOD

There is a story told of a tyrant king who used to take firewood from the poor by force and sell it to the rich at a great profit.

A Holy man went up to him and said: “You are a snake that bites everyone it sees; or an owl, digging up and ruining the very place you live in. Your injustices may pass unpunished among us, but they cannot escape God, the Knower of the secrets. Be not unjust to the people of this earth so that their complaints are not raised up to Heaven.”

The tyrant got angry at these words and threw him out of his court. Days passed by and the king continued in his unfair practices. Then one day, the palace of the king caught fire and was reduced to ashes.

At that time, the Holy man, happened to pass by and heard the tyrant moan, “Why did this tragedy befall me?”

The Holy man replied, “This is the result of the sighs of grief from the hearts of the poor.” He then said, “Guard against the smoke of an afflicted heart, for it will undoubtedly start a fire one day. Give nobody’s heart pain as long as you can avoid it, for a single sigh may set the whole world into flames!”

LESSON 8

FOUNDATION OF TAWHEED

You must be quite familiar with the life of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) and the reconstruction of the Holy Ka'abah. Let us look at one aspect of this amazing project.

Prophet Is'maeel (a.s.) was still a youth when both his father and he travelled to the holy city of Mecca to re-build the House of Allah (S.W.T.). He had made a promise that he would help his father to revive the school of Tawheed. With this intention, they both started the work of building the holy place.

Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) and Is'maeel (a.s.) worked hard and carried many heavy sacks of sand to and fro to make the bricks. Some people from the tribes living nearby helped them build up the walls. Finally, when the Holy Ka'abah was completed, Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) raised his hands in supplication and recited aloud:

"Yaa Rabbi (O my Lord)! The house of Tawheed is now ready for mankind so that they may worship and attend to Your call of worship! O my Lord! Accept this humble deed from Your weak servant and may this place of worship remain safe and pure from any impurity, let it become the foundation of Tawheed.

"O my Lord! Create from my offspring, lovers of Tawheed who can serve You only! Send prophets in guidance to mankind. Show them the path of true knowledge and wisdom."

DA'WAH TO ALL

Later, Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) climbed on top of the Mountain of Abu Qubays and called out aloud to all the people:

"O people of Hejaz! O people! Come and embrace the call of Tawheed at this central point of Tawheed! Get rid of shirk, humiliation and idol-worshipping!"

WHY VISIT THE HOLY KA'ABAH?

Since the early days, the Holy Ka'abah has been a place of worship and a means for people to meet in the way of Allah (S.W.T.) breaking all boundaries of race, colour and social status.

Unique Characteristics of the Holy House

1. The Holy Ka'abah is a place of worship.
2. Muslims' spirits and hearts become united as they share religious values. Although they come from different ethnic background, under the fort of Tawheed, they are able to solve the social and political problems in the global Muslim world. This sacred place gives Muslims an opportunity to learn, share and exchange ideas.
3. The Ka'abah therefore becomes the uniting factor for Muslims. It enables them to stand against the Kuffar and Mushrikeen and to be actively involved in creating

awareness in the Muslim societies. It provides an opportunity to raise the banner of Islam and Tawheed. As the central point of QIBLAH, where Muslims all over the world face during their Salaat, it acts as a banner for Islam all over the world. All prophets have visited the Holy Ka'abah for pilgrimage and every Muslim tries to go for pilgrimage even if it is once in their lifetime.

4. This holy place re-kindles the spirits of Muslims towards the truth of the message of Islam.

A Holy Verse

The Qur'an says:

"And when Ibrahim and Is'maeel raised the foundations of the house, (Ibrahim prayed): 'Our Lord accept from us (this duty); surely Thou art the hearing, the knowing.

Our Lord! And make us both submissive to Thee and (raise) from our offspring a nation submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of worship and turn to us (mercifully), surely Thou art the oft-returning (to mercy), the merciful."

Sura Baqara, Verses 127 & 128

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) was a man of God - a Prophet sent by Allah (S.W.T.) to convey the message of TAWHEED.
2. He was able to spread this message of truth with the help of his son Is'maeel (a.s.).
3. Prophets enlightened people towards knowing Tawheed of Allah (S.W.T.).
4. After the re-building of the Holy Ka'abah; love, co-operation, spirit of brotherhood and good counsel spread in the Muslim ummah.

Think and Answer

1. In his time, what was the most important role Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) played?
2. What was the prayer of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) after laying the foundation of the Holy Ka'abah?
3. Why does a Muslim visit this sacred place?

Introduction to Chapter Four

In The Name Of Allah (S.W.T.), the Beneficent, the Merciful

THE HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.W.) OF ISLAM

HIS SEERAH AND STAGES OF DIVINE PROPAGATION

Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.w.) who was the son of Abdullah ibn Abdul Muttalib is indeed the perfect and the most beloved of all prophets of Islam. At the age of forty years, he received the first divine revelation of prophethood of Islam.

The final message and completion of Islam came through him. During his lifetime, he played a very important role in combating shirk i.e. idol worshipping and all the other faces of polytheism.

In this chapter, we will study the message of the last and final Messenger. It will be necessary for us to closely study the seerah of the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.). From his life and personality, we can learn how he resisted all sorts of kufr and how his excellent manners brought even the polytheists to the belief in One God.

Because of this very akhlaq, he is referred to as the 'BEST EXAMPLE' for mankind in the Holy Qur'an.

LESSON 9

DA'AWAH FOR THE NEAR ONES TO ISLAM

By the 3rd year of *Be'that* (Prophethood), the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had spent all his time just trying to revive the light of Islam. There were several ways he used to do this. Initially, it was necessary for him to hold small group meetings because the time had not yet come to spread the message of Islam to all. The people of Mecca were not aware of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s real objectives yet.

During the early stages of da'awah, there were about 40 Muslims who showed loyalty, co-operation and supported his divine call. These people stood firm behind him all through their lives.

Gradually, Islam established itself in the form of these trustworthy and sincere individuals. In the meantime, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w) tried to gain the trust of the general public and through his perfect conduct, he succeeded so well that he became famously known as SADIQ (TRUTHFUL) and AMEEN (TRUSTWORTHY).

Then the Divine call came down from the heavens and Allah (S.W.T.) said to him:

"Awaken the hearts of the people towards the Almighty Creator Allah (S.W.T.) and Islam, and protect them from the severe punishment of the hereafter. It is time for you to spread the heavenly message with compassion, gentleness, humility and wisdom."

Soon after, our Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) undertook his first invitation. With the help of his cousin (and future son-in-law) – Imam Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.), he organised a meal and invited the close members of his family to join him.

Da'watul Dhul-Ashira - The First Invitation.

40 people arrived for the special meal. The Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.) showed them warm hospitality and said, *"Ali and I express sincere thanks to you for having accepted our invitation and may you enjoy this humble meal…"*

It was a blessed meal indeed! After everyone had eaten, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) began to speak about his mission. However, as soon as Abu Lahab – one of his uncles – realised what he was saying, he created an awful scene and prevented the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) from talking any more. Chaos broke out and everyone left without hearing the important message.

Let us try to reflect on what went on in that first meeting:

1. Did the behaviour of Abu Lahab in any way discourage the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) from spreading the message of Islam?
2. Did it stop him from guiding the people? And did he despair and lose hope in Allah (S.W.T.)?
3. What were the ways of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s Islamic work? What strategies did he use in guiding people? What course of action did he use to put the love of truth in people's hearts?

When we ponder on these issues, we appreciate the fact that the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.) never gave up on his divine mission. He exercised a lot of patience in order to perform his duties. This was for the sake of saving humanity from the darkness of ignorance and to bring them into the light of Truth and success.

The Second Invitation

Trusting in Allah (S.W.T.), the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) waited for a few days and then called the same people again for a second meal. He was equally kind and hospitable this time around. After the simple but wonderful meal, he began to speak. This time the people listened. He said:

"Dear guests! What I am about to say may not be acceptable to your ears, if you wish to listen to my counsel you may do so. If you do not wish to do so, the choice is yours and you can follow your own path. But I request you all to heed what I am about to say.

"I remind you that I am a gift and a blessing for you, a guide for you and I will become your salvation in the hereafter, so think about what I say.

“O people, if I were to tell you that there was an army of enemies just behind this mountain, would you take my word and believe me? Or would you run away like renegades? What steps would you take?"

All those gathered replied: *“O Muhammad! We trust that what you utter is nothing but the truth."*

It was now time for the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) to make his announcement, giving glad tidings to the guests and conveying the pure message of Islam. He continued, “*I wish nothing but goodness and happiness for you. I do not and have never uttered a single lie. O people! Remember death is not the end of our long journey, life after death is another continuous life in another world.*

“O people, I am a Prophet sent by Allah (S.W.T.), blessed by Him as a mercy for the whole universe. I shoulder a heavy and a great responsibility to spread this divine MESSAGE OF ISLAM, and I desire that you should follow this path. Come and join this sacred course to Allah (S.W.T.)…”

There was absolute silence in the room as the stunned people looked at the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). It was then that a young man stood up from the crowd and exclaimed, “O Prophet of Allah (S.W.T.), I believe in the ways of Tawheed, Ma'ad, and have full trust in your prophethood and your message of truth.”

Do you know who it was? It was no other than Ali Ibn Abi Taalib! Joy illuminated the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)’s face as he asked Ali to confirm what he had said not once or twice but three times!

Then the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) made a second announcement, *“Most surely, this is my brother, my inheritor, my leader for you, so take heed and obey him …”*

He then repeated and said,
“This young man is my close brother, and my Wazir, he is none other than Ali Ibn Abi Taalib.”

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Even while some of those gathered were excited and happy at the news, others like Abu Lahab and his followers looked plainly angry and walked out. These became the permanent enemies of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and of Islam.

The questions that come up in all our minds at this point is: Why did some express feelings of joy and excitement when Imam Ali (a.s.) was given such a great title and later turn against him?

Did the people who were present fully understand what the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was saying? Did they appreciate the high and noble status of Imam Ali (a.s.) as given by the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.)?

It is important for us to sit and seriously think about what actually transpired in the mind of the people during this great event!

A Holy Verse

The Qur'an mentions:

"And warn your nearest relations and be kind to him who follows you of the believers."

Sura Shua'ra, Verse 215

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. The initial stage of da'awah performed by our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was to a few people. Gradually more and more were called to Islam
2. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) imparted the message of Islam through love, kindness, care, gentleness and showed great patience in this mission.
3. He enjoined the people towards goodness and imparted the fundamentals of Islam clearly and with certainty.
4. He also prepared the Ummah, from the beginning, with a spiritual guide and leader.

Think and Answer

1. Define da'awah in Islam? What were the unique ways of performing da'awah that the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.) used?
2. Why did the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) begin his mission with only a handful?
3. Describe the event of the first and second invitations of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.) and their respective outcomes.
4. Explain in your own words the content of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s sermon during the latter event? Who replied him and what was this reply?
5. What do you understand by the statement made by the young man?

LESSON 10

THE UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

News reached the holy city of Mecca that Muhammad ibn Abdullah had proclaimed himself a Prophet sent by the One and only Almighty God.

As we mentioned a group of people had already become close to him and the message of Tawheed. This small but very committed group pledged their allegiance and full support to the cause of Allah (S.W.T.).

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had, in presence of the high ranked dignitaries of the Quraysh and the people in Mecca, showed his deep respect to Ali Ibn Abi Talib. He openly called him his cousin, helper and inheritor. We should note here that at no time did Hadhrat Abu Talib, (father of Ali), show any kind of disrespect or resentment to the spread of Islam. He did not protest against the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s claim or show disapproval of his son's loyalty to him. On the contrary, Abu Talib gave his full support to the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s message.

After the second invitation, Allah (S.W.T.) sent down another message telling the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) to progress to the next step in his mission. He said, *"O Muhammad! Guide whosoever you can towards the light of Islam, distinguish the truth from falsehood, and do not be afraid of the idol-worshippers, they shall soon perish and be totally destroyed…"*

Having heard these powerful words the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) now went to Mount Saffa to share his important news. As soon as he reached the top of the mountain, he called out loudly,
"O people of Mecca! O Quraysh! A heavenly message has now come down which is extremely powerful. It is indeed a voice that is filled with love, devotion and faith. For those who seek the right path, take heed of the heavenly message for such is the great news of the day… I believe time has come for you take this important message and remember that you recognise Muhammad as the Truthful (Sadiq) and the Trustworthy (Ameen)."

The Meccans all gathered around the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) listening to what he had to say. He looked at the attentive audience and continued,
"O Meccans! O womenfolk and menfolk of Quraysh! If I were to say that there is an army of enemies behind this mountain, ready to attack you, would you believe me?"

The crowd answered, *"Yes, O Muhammad! Verily, you are an honest, trustworthy man and we know that till this moment you have never uttered a single lie."*

Having got this commitment from the people the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) began to elaborate what he had said at the invitation,

"Oh people! I am a Prophet sent by God, and have been blessed for the entire universe, I have been bestowed with the divine message to be universally spread for all times and all ages.

“Oh people! Remember, death is not an ending to life, it is a beginning of a new life. Death is like sleep and when you wake up from your sleep, it is as if you are getting a new life, in preparation for the Day of Reckoning. If you perform good deeds, you will most certainly be rewarded in abundance. But if you choose to do evil, the results will be severe tortures and punishment.

“Oh people! I have been given the best and complete programme for you. Indeed the return will bring you happiness, bliss in this world and the hereafter, now read after me and proclaim: ‘La Ilaaha Ila Allah...’ - ‘There is no God but Allah (S.W.T.)’

“This will bring you happiness and you will attain salvation. Accept the Oneness of God, and show faith in Him. There is no distinction between Arab and non-Arab, do not discriminate, none is superior in His eyes, except the one who has adopted piety. Be united, live in peace, harmony and accept this Holy message…”

When the idol-worshippers and the wealthy personalities of Mecca heard this, they were startled by the contents of this heavenly message that was being delivered by Muhammad Ibn Abdullah. Each one of them whispered to the other:

“What is this? What is Muhammad saying? How dare he talk in such a manner in our presence?”

Since Abu Taalib was also a respected and well-known personality, they wondered about him too. “Has Abu Taalib given full commitment to Muhammad? Why are we ignorant of Abu Taalib's stance?”

Even as a murmur rose from the crowd, Abu Lahab shouted out aloud from the far end in rage, “Woe to you! Is this what you wanted us here for, to give us this message of yours?”

A huge confusion broke out in the crowd and most of the people left. There was total disorder and many were shouting …
“Did you all hear what Muhammad said? He is a Messenger of God! Is it possible to have a messenger from God? Can it be possible for a human being to be a Prophet? And what is a Prophet anyway? Does he mean that the idols that we, and our forefathers, worshipped are false? We don’t have to follow Muhammad and his claims to prophethood!”

Seeing that he would be able to do no more at that time, our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) left and went home. He had however, accomplished the first step by introducing to the Makkans, the concept of belief in One God.

After that first time, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) went out everyday and spoke to the people. Few listened to him but he never got angry or gave up. In all circumstances he chose to use wisdom and gentle words.

The enemies of Islam knew that Muhammad was a man of great character. When they saw that he was not openly succeeding in gaining many followers, they wondered what steps he would take next to achieve his aim. This made them nervous and they watched his every move.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.), in the meantime, was waiting for the right moment and opportunity further spread Islam.

The question that many were asking at this time was 'How was the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) going to manage to spread the heavenly call and what were his long term goals in this mission?'

A Holy Verse

The Qur'an says:

"Therefore declare thou (O' Our Apostle Muhammad!) openly what thou art commanded and turn away from the polytheists"

Sura Hijr, Verse 94

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. From the beginning, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) always used gentle words and kindness to spread the message of Islam. He never spoke harshly to anyone – not even the enemies who insulted him time and again.
2. In asking the people to listen to him from the top the mountain he first established that even before they knew his rank as a Prophet, the people already trusted him beyond any doubt. He also showed his trust in Allah (S.W.T.) and his confidence in the Truth of what he was saying.
3. He emphasized that people should understand the concept of Tawheed and the life in the Hereafter; that they should worship the One Supreme Lord and fully commit themselves to the Islamic dogma: "LA ILAHA ILLA ALLAH"

Think and Answer

1. What policies did the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) use in spreading the message of Islam?
2. What measures did the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) take in calling the people towards the truth?
3. Give an account of what transpired at Mount Saffa.
4. Why was the divine universal message spread in parts?

LESSON 11

REJECTING ALL KINDS OF SELFISH MOTIVES

Having discussed the general need and concept of prophethood and looked at the early days of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s mission, we can understand that he was sent as a bringer of glad tidings and a universal message. In return, what is expected from us is that we follow this message in order to gain salvation in the hereafter.

As days passed in Mecca, more and more people began to embrace Islam. They had begun to realise that their previous faith in idols was baseless and without foundation. In the meantime those who were stubborn and refused to think began to worry about the opposition that was growing to their idol worshipping practices.

They tried all methods to stop the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) – from offering bribes to humiliating and insulting him but the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) saw through every plan of theirs and remained firm as a rock in his quest.

It is a source of great surprise to the world and of pride to the Muslims that this man single-handedly enlightened a nation that was deep in the pit of ignorance, towards the purity of Tawheed and Islam. He motivated people throughout Arabia to aspire towards the noble path of Allah (S.W.T.). He exposed the idol-worshipping of past nations and brought peoples' attention to the ugliness of the destiny of such nations.

But none of this was easy! It took a lot of patience, faith and self control on the part of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). Let us see some of the ways in which the Mushrikeen tried to stop the spread of Islam.

Once the Mushrikeen arranged for a meeting with Abu Taalib, who was looked up to as a leader amongst the Quraysh. They asked him:
"Why do you prefer to keep silence when Muhammad is spreading Islam? We need some answers from you. Don't you see that our people are being attacked from all sides, there is chaos and confusion in the city, seeds of discord and disunity have already been planted amongst us, and what are you doing about the whole situation?

"Do you realise that your nephew has carefully made calculated moves to destroy our gods from their roots? He has certainly tricked us into this ugly plot!"

Seeing that they were not getting a positive response from him, they began to take a threatening tone: *"O Abu Taalib! We respect you as an elder of the Quraysh that is why we have remained calm and patient towards these sudden changes and the new movement that Muhammad has brought, but it has gone too far now! He is insulting our gods - the gods that we have always worshipped! He condemns them and claims that we are ignorant. Now that it has reached to its peak, we will not tolerate it any further!"*

Saying this, they left. Immediately, Abu Taalib went to meet his nephew and told him about the meeting with the Mushrikeen. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) said to him: "*My dear uncle! All these problems are because of the Shirk they perform. They have usurped*

the rights of their women-folk. They have refused to accept the call of Islam. Islam rejects all forms of false deities and has liberated human beings from such man-made gods. Most surely I am the Hujjat (divine proof) from God to you and for the whole mankind."

Abu Taalib listened to his words and agreed with him. Thus, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) continued preaching Islam with the same energy as before.

Seeing that their threats had not worked, the Mushrikeen thought of using a different approach. Because they did not understand the noble character of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) they actually thought that they would be able to bribe him with worldly temptations! They came up to Abu Taalib again and presented the following proposals to him for the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.):

1. We shall honor Muhammad with a grand status, make him popular and give him the leadership of *HEJAAZ (now known as Medina).*
2. We shall overwhelm him with the wealth and make him the richest man amongst all the Quraysh.

In return they asked for the following condition to be fulfilled:
“Muhammad must stop this new movement. He will not insult our gods and discontinue the talk of One God.”

What a laughable bargain! Since Abu Taalib had promised to pass on their message, he went to the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and told him of it. In reply, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) dashed the hopes of the Mushrikeen by clearly stating:
“ By God! Even if they give me the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, and all the worldly glamour and temptations and its beauties under my disposal, I will not stop spreading the divine message of Islam and the worship of Allah (S.W.T.). Dear Uncle! Tell them to affirm and accept only one statement – the Islamic Kalemah – so that they may attain bliss and salvation in this world and the hereafter."

Having failed once again, the Mushrikeen began to taunt Abu Taalib saying:
“O Abu Taalib, you are a noble man. A man highly respected among the Quraysh, you have solved our problems in the past, but you don’t seem to be able to assist us in solving this big crisis for now! Why don’t you leave Muhammad and accept Ammar Bin Walid as your son till Muhammad realises his grave mistakes!”

These words made Abu Taalib angry and he replied, *“What madness! How dare you humiliate us and come up with such insulting proposals and wretched thoughts! Shame on you! Woe upon you!”* With these words he turned away from them, showing his full loyalty to the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and Islam. The Mushrikeen knew then that they would not get any support from him against Muhammad.

Despite such difficulties, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) never gave in to worldly temptations but fought constantly against falsehood in order to establish the truth. His success can

be seen in the form of the millions of Muslims living in the world today and the many others who continue to accept his call towards Allah (S.W.T.)!

Through his actions and decisions, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) taught us that as Muslims we are responsible for Islam and carry a very heavy duty to combat idol-worshipping and un-Islamic thoughts/ideas. We have be patient and keep up the true spirit of Tawheed.

A Holy Verse

Allah (S.W.T.) says in the Qur'an:

" To this then go on inviting, and go on steadfastly on the right way as you are commanded and do not follow their low desires, but say: I believe in what Allah has revealed of the Book and I am commanded to be just among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord; we shall have our deeds and you shall have yours; no plea need there be (now) between us and you: Allah will gather us together, and to Him is the return"

Sura Shura, Verse15

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. Through the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s da'awah, he awakened those who were fully immersed in ignorance and disbeliefs. Before his proclamation as a messenger, people were totally drowned in corrupt ways. The message of Islam gave light to the dead hearts.
2. The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) used a number of different ways to eradicate idol-worshipping and take people back to the Belief in the real God - Allah (S.W.T.). This is one of the signs of a free-thinker.
3. The meaning of the reply given by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) to the arrogant officials of the Mushrikeen through his uncle i.e. *Even if you put the sun on my right hand, the moon on the left hand, never will I will stop delivering the true message of Islam,* is a lesson to us even today.

Think and Answer

1. Give an account of reasons why you think people had deviate from the truth?
2. What were the various methods that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) used in his da'awah to the public?
3. What were the plots made by the leaders of Mushrikeen to stop the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.)?
4. How did the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) react to the proposals of pagan leaders?
5. What is our duty as Muslims towards Islam and da'awah for Islam? How are you responsible today in safeguarding Islam and its rich values? What are the challenges you face in school in order to maintain your Islamic values?

LESSON 12

IF MY MOTHER IS TERRIBLY UPSET…?

A young lad lay ailing in bed. He suffered from a sickness that had no cure except death. People, realising that no worldly medicine could help him, went to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and asked him to come and pray for the young man's suffering to be eased.

When the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) arrived, he saw a frail youth, tossing, turning and all the while moaning in extreme pain. He constantly cried out in fear, screaming about wild and terrifying things that no one else seemed to see. Our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) realised immediately that the man was fast approaching death and could see what awaited him in the hereafter. He sat down near the bed and asked gently, *"Why are you in so much grief? What makes you cry so?"*

The man slowly opened his eyes and saw the gentle face of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) looking down at him. With great difficulty, he managed to say, "Oh Messenger of God! I am now conscious of my limited time in this world and feel the nearness of death. Just a few minutes ago, I saw some extremely ugly and frightening faces and I felt that they wanted to imprison me and chain me in a world of severe punishment. I am scared of those faces and I fear for myself!"

Hearing this, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) turned to those who were present and asked. *"Is this young man's mother alive? If she is, please ask her to come right away."*

The people rushed out to find her and brought her to the Prophet (s.a.w.w.). She entered and stood a little way away from the dying youth's bed. Seeing this behaviour, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) asked her, *"You do not seem to be affected by the pain your son is in, are you angry with him for any reason?"*

At this, the woman replied, "O Prophet of Allah (S.W.T.)! I have endured great pain and difficulties in raising my child. During his infancy, I spent sleepless nights to make sure that he slept peacefully and during the day, I struggled to earn money for our bread. Many days I remained hungry but fed him. Despite all this, when he became older, he forgot all that I had sacrificed for him. His attitude changed and he started disrespecting me. Often, he was rude and angry. I was deeply hurt and in the end I could not bear his treatment anymore so I complained to my Lord Allah (S.W.T.)."

Having heard the mother express her bitter feelings, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) advised her, *"O Mother! Your son was young and naïve. You have every right to grieve and feel hurt but in the end you are a mother and a mother's compassion exceeds everything else. I beg you to forgive your son's ignorance. Do not be bitter about him. If you will be happy, Allah (S.W.T.) will forgive him and relieve him from the pain that he is presently suffering."*

Hearing this and looking at her son crying out in pain, the mother felt her love rekindled and she quickly raised her hands pleading to her Lord,
"O Allah (S.W.T.)! For the sake of Your Prophet, I forgive my son and request You to do the same."

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) then added his own dua asked for forgiveness for the man from Allah (S.W.T.). The Almighty accepted their prayers and excused the youth's sins.

In a few moments, the man stopped thrashing about and a peaceful look came over his face. He opened his eyes once again and this time smiled, looking at the Prophet (s.a.w.w.), he spoke with gratitude, *"O Prophet of Allah (S.W.T.), I sincerely thank you for your blessed visit. The two beastly figures who had approached me earlier have gone and instead two handsome angels with broad smiles on their faces are now coming towards me!"* With these words he recited the Kalematu – Shahaadatayn and he left this temporary world to meet with His Lord, with a smile on his face.

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah (S.W.T.) has given great emphasis on the respect to our parents. He has advised children to treat their parents with kindness and be humble and obedient towards them. If a person fails in this important duty, he must seek forgiveness both from his parents as well as from the Almighty.

According to our 6th holy Imam, Jaffer Al-Sadiq (a.s.),
"One who does good to his parents will indeed receive goodness and during the time of his death, his soul will leave his body very gently and easily. Such a person will never face poverty in this world."

A Holy Verse

We are told in the Qur'an
"And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve any but Him, and do goodness to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as) 'uf' nor harass them, and speak to them a generous word."

Sura Bani Israeel, Verse 23

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT …

1. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) of Islam highly recommended and encouraged believers to visit the sick and show kindness to them.
2. Islam has laid great emphasis for children to respect and value their parents, especially the mother, for she has borne great pain in nurturing and looking after them. If one fails to show kindness to ones' parents, he will live in despair and a severe punishment awaits him in the hereafter.
3. Allah (S.W.T.) in the Holy Qur'an has commanded all believers to show Mercy and Kindness towards parents. He has ordered children to lower their voice in front of their parents. Even the smallest word in reply i.e. 'UF!' is forbidden.

Think and Answer

1. Why was the young lad in severe pain?
2. What brought the changes in his severe condition?
3. What do you understand from the warning in the Holy Qur'an to mankind on behaviour towards one's parents – verse 23 of Sura Bani Israel? Explain your answer fully.
4. What lessons have you derived from the ailing man's experiences, hours before death?

ANECDOTE

Infacncy and Age

One day, in the rashness of youth, I spoke harshly to my mother. She sat in a corner with tears in her eyes said:

"You forget the days of your infancy! Can you recall those days when you would cling to my bosom helplessly and would not dare to speak to me loudly? Now you are powerful as a tiger and formidable as an elephant only because I am an old woman ..."

Introduction to Chapter Five

In The Name Of Allah (S.W.T.), the Beneficent, the Merciful

ALL ARE EQUAL IN THE DIVINE SYSTEM OF LAW AND ORDER

Issues related to politics and well-being of the society are part of the fundamental Islamic laws. For a Muslim leader to govern a society he must practice justice and equity. In this chapter and the lessons that follow, we will look at the importance of "Equality and Justice" in accordance to the divine laws.

'JUSTICE' is one of the core elements in the establishment of an Islamic Government. It is noteworthy to mention that in order to spread and apply justice it is necessary for there be a sense of Islamic Brotherhood which allows a person to know another's problems.

The implementation of justice helps Muslims to attain a life of respect, honour, dignity and total commitment to Islam.

LESSON 13

SPIRITUAL ROLE MODELS

The Infallible Imams

At the time of the khilafat of Imam Ali Ibn Abi Taalib (a.s.), he once lost his armour. Later, he happened to pass by the open market (bazaar) of Kufah and his eyes fell on a Christian selling the very same armour! Imam (a.s.) came a little closer to the Christian glancing at the armour and then took it in his hand and studied it closely while asking the seller about it. The man quickly replied, "That which is in your hand belongs to me," and using some force took it from the Imam (a.s.)'s hand.

His behaviour attracted the attention of the people around and they gathered around the two men. Imam Ali (a.s.) calmly told the Christian, *"What are you saying? How can you claim this to be yours, when it does not belong to you?"*

He further added, *"I am certain this armour is mine therefore return it to me..."*

When the Christian continued to deny his claim, the Holy Imam (a.s.) decided to take him to the court and lodged a complaint against him. As they walked into the court, the Qaadhi saw them enter and quickly stood up in respect of the Imam (a.s.). He greeted him politely and then inquired, "What has brought you here?"

"This armour is mine. I neither sold it nor did I give it as a present to anyone; now I have found it with this man, and he refuses to give it back to me," explained the Imam (a.s.).

The Qaadhi turned and asked the Christian seller *"What do you have to say about it?"*

The man insisted stubbornly, "I will not give the armour to him, because it belongs to me. I am not calling him a liar, but it is mine."

Seeing that he could not make a clear decision based on the facts he had, the Qaadhi requested both the Imam (a.s.) and the seller to bring two witnesses who would give evidence on their behalf. Our Holy Imam (a.s.) began laughing and said, *"The judge is right! Now I must present witnesses, but I have none."*

Since the plaintiff had no witnesses, the judgement was passed in favour of the Christian who walked away with the armour. After a few steps, he stopped. He knew the armour belonged to Imam (a.s.) and his conscience struck him.

He thought to himself, "This manner of rule and conduct is not of ordinary human beings. Rather, it is the government of prophets. Islam advocates matters in absolute fairness, equality and justice. The law applies in the same way to all people – even the khalifa, himself! How wonderfully just!"

Retracing his steps, he entered the court again and with great shame admitted his mistake and addressed those were sitting, saying
"O Muslims! The Islamic laws show perfect justice and this indeed has awakened me. Your laws give importance to equality. I won in the case against your Holy leader, and this surprised me. Even though I a Christian, the laws didn't change but brought justice as they were meant to. I have witnessed that even a leader of the Muslims can be summoned in the court of justice. This shows that no one can misuse the divine laws!

"How was it possible for the judge not to favour the Imam, and to maintain the law as the final word? This court has brought truth – complete truth. I bear witness that there is no other deen except Islam that advocates divine laws, I now embrace Islam."

The man accepted Islam and pledged his loyalty to Allah (S.W.T.), the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) as the final Messenger from God and to Imam Ali (a.s.) as the guardian of Islam and the pure, truthful Imam. He then spoke to the Holy Imam (a.s.) and confessed his wrong-doings:
"I swear by God, truth is with you and this armour is yours. It was after the Battle of Siffeen, when you had left behind the armour on the battleground that I took it. I am really ashamed for having caused all this to you, I seek forgiveness from you."

Imam Ali (a.s.) was very happy and said to the man: "In respect of the love of truth you have shown and your accepting of this perfect deen, I give back the armour to you."

The man turned out to be a devout companion of the Holy Imam (a.s.). He was a great defender of Islam and its teachings. Later, he participated in the battle of Naharwan and fought with bravery becoming a symbol of martyrdom.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. The laws of Islam establish social justice. This helps Muslim societies to promote equality, for the success of mankind.
2. When a society does not implement divine laws, there is no true peace, harmony or contentment. Theft and usurping of one's rights are common evils. This destroys the roots of families and societies at large.
3. Muslims should follow the laws of Islam, and take full responsibility in their duties as defenders of the divine regulations. We should try to avoid bribery and any sort of un-Islamic commands made by men.
4. When a society advocates equality and justice, there is room for love, friendship and truth. This is one of the greatest gifts of Allah (S.W.T.).
5. When such sublime laws are practised both by the Islamic judges and the common men, there is no place for corruption. The wealth and property of the public is safeguarded. One should seek solutions from the laws of Islam rather than turning to man-made laws.
6. Muslims should make it a policy to combat injustice and support the truth.
7. The Islamic courts should be flawlessly just and act as role models for others to emulate (copy).
8. There is no distinction in Islam. Whether rich or poor, status and recognition do not serve as conditions in performing justice.
9. The Muslim Qaadhi (judge) should always take into consideration the views of both parties and be completely impartial i.e. not take sides.

Think and Answer

1. Explain how the Christian man came to embrace Islam.
2. What were Imam Ali (a.s.)'s words when he heard the Christian turn to Islam?
3. How does equality and justice help build a healthy society? What are the positive effects?
4. What do you think justice actually mean in the eyes of the divine laws of Islam? Explain your answer.

LESSON 14

BROTHERHOOD

A man once sat in the presence of the 7th Holy Imam, Musa Ibn Jaffer (a.s.). He saw a friend of his, called Muhammad, from afar and smiled at him. Muhammad smiled back and from the pleasure on both their faces at seeing one another, it was obvious that they were good friends.

Seeing this exchange, Imam (a.s.) leaned nearer and asked the man, "You really like Muhammad, don't you?" He replied, "Yes! O grandson of the Holy Prophet, I do! Muhammad is a pious man. He has a very strong faith and is a practicing Muslim. Is he also your friend?"

Imam (a.s.) replied:
"Of course! As you have said, he is a man of deep faith and has very good akhlaq. Surely all believers are brothers to one another. We must always try to show compassion to our believing brothers.

"Did you know that anyone who looks at a Mo'meen brother with contempt, falsely accuses him, or does anything that would harm the man is behaving in an un-Islamic manner? We should always behave with goodness and act with kindness towards other believers. If we intend to gain Allah (S.W.T.)'s blessings, we must try to be good to one another. For the one who deceives his believing brother will be most surely deprived of Allah (S.W.T.)'s blessings."

Islam is a way of life and it encourages goodness among people. Deceit, slander, gossip and mockery are ugly acts and unacceptable in Islam. Such devious manners create destruction within a society.

Islam treats both Muslim men and Muslim woman with the eyes of equity. Beautiful gestures and titles, like brotherhood, will do no good if they are not implemented or put into action. Islam requires from us that we *show* compassion by fulfilling the needs and wants of other people. Good qualities, if put in action, become the standard of Islamic ethics.

The true Believers are not only brothers and sisters in faith but also in action. A practicing Muslim will not dare to hurt or upset another. Whenever a Mo'meen or a Mo'meenah is hurting, others who practice imaan will also feel his/her pain.

Our 6th infallible Imam, Al-Sadiq (a.s.) has said, *"Muslims are brothers to one another and they have rights over each other. If one of them is hungry, is it possible for the others to eat and leave him in the state of hunger? Is it possible for a Muslim to quench his own thirst whilst his brother remains thirsty? If a believing brother in faith does not have anything to wear, is it possible for the others to be clothed and live him naked?"*

No, it cannot be so! Every true practicing Muslim society consists of individuals who aim to provide equal resources to all its members. They do not rest until this aim is achieved.

On the same issue, our 6th Imam (a.s.) has also said:
"Every Muslim has a right over his brother in faith and they have duties towards each other, some of which are:

1. *One should greet the other when they meet.*
2. *If a Mo'meen becomes sick, the others should visit him.*
3. *If he dies, it becomes their duty to pay him his last respects and attend his funeral services.*
4. *If a Mo'meen invites another to his house, he must accept his invitation.*
5. *The most important of all is: whatever a believer desires for himself, he must desire the same for others.*

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. The most beautiful gift that Islam has given its followers is the close bond of brotherhood and unity. If we implement the rules concerning this matter, then we will have the perfect society – a thing that the entire world is searching for.
2. Whenever a believer needs help, others should be ready to help.
3. The most important of all Islamic morals is that whatever a believer desires for himself, he should desire the same for the others. And whatever he dislikes for himself, he must dislike the same for others as well.

Think and Answer

1. What outcomes do you think ugly habits like backbiting, insulting and false accusations can lead to?
2. What does Islam offer to the Muslim Ummah?
3. What do you understand from the sayings of our 6th Holy Imam (a.s.) quoted in the lesson above?
4. Find out what the strong recommendations of our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) are in matters that relate to the rights believers have upon one another? Explain your answers (and sources).

LESSON 15
HARD WORK AND INDEPENDENDENCE

Asking in Islam has two meanings. The first one refers to inquiring about things that one is ignorant of. To do this, we need to ask those who possess the wealth of knowledge. Obviously, to ask questions is a commendable act and also an excellent method of learning. It is highly recommended that anyone who does not know should ask those who do and gain from them. Islam came to awaken souls and brought the light of knowledge. *The doors to the seas and oceans of knowledge and learning are wide open, and the key is with you. One of the ways is through asking questions.*

The second type of asking is the seeking help from others in order to further oneself materially. In Islam, anyone claiming to be a beggar is disliked and one who does not strive to remove himself from this position is out of favour with Allah (S.W.T.) and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.).

Once a man came and asked the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.), "O Prophet of Allah, advise me of good acts with which I may pave my way towards Jannah (Paradise)."

In answer to the man's query, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) recommended three important points. He told him:
"*If you really wish happiness in the eternal life of the hereafter and want to be amongst the dwellers of Jannah, take the following points seriously and implement them:*

1. *Avoid getting unnecessarily annoyed.*
2. *Do not ask (material) things from people.*
3. *Like for others what you like for yourself.*"

What an important message to us all! The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) clearly shows us that a true Believer is not dependent on people. We must try not to humiliate ourselves in front of others. On the Day of Judgement, Allah (S.W.T.) will bring down disgrace upon those who relied on fellow human beings for their sustenance.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) showed utmost respect to the Muslims and looked at them with dignity. Therefore, a Muslim must not lower himself in front of others under any circumstances. He must learn how to ask for the fulfilment wishes and to direct his requests only to the most Kind and Merciful Lord. Muslims are valuable people and most surely valuable in His eyes too!

If we take a look at one event that took place during the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.), we will be better able to appreciate this message. This is what happened:

There was a man in the city who did not work for his livelihood. His family lived in appalling conditions of poverty. One day, his wife suggested that he go and visit the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and ask for some advice. She was confident that he would be in a position to assist them in their difficult times and would help ease their problems.

The man reached the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s house and found people gathered around him. Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) greeted and welcomed him. The man sat down but felt ashamed to state his problems in front of the others. Through his divine knowledge, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) knew the purpose of the man's visit, and began to address all those seated. He said:
"Any one who seeks my help, I will most certainly help him. But, I sincerely advise you all to be diligent, hard-working and ambitious so that you become independent. Do not rely on others. After you have struggled then finally seek help from God."

Hearing these words, the man quickly understood their meaning. He immediately bid the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) farewell and left for his home. The following morning, he decided to try and find work but at the end of the day, his efforts seemed to be in vain and he decided to visit the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) again. After exchanging warm greetings, he sat beside him with the intention of sharing his troubles.

It was in the fine character of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.) that he respected the situation of others and their shortcomings. Even before the man could speak, he repeated his advice of the previous day. Once again, the man was struck by the words of the Messenger of Allah (S.W.T.). He thought to try once again but the next evening saw him no better that before.

For the third time, he sought out the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) feeling that he had no way out except to beg for his help. This time the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) repeated the same advice and emphasized on having faith in Allah (S.W.T.). He said:
"Whoever wants his desires to be fulfilled, should work hard, be ambitious, have a strong faith in Allah (S.W.T.) and seek help from Him. Have certainty that Allah (S.W.T.) will help."

This time, the man left determined to overcome all his doubts. That night he sought help from the Almighty and placed all his hopes in Him telling himself that he would certainly be answered. The next day, he went into the forest and cut down some trees. Chopping them into logs, he carried the wood into the town and sold them in the market. This success encouraged him and strengthened his faith in Allah (S.W.T.). Slowly as the days passed, he saw the fruits of his labour and soon he was able to lift his family out of poverty and live an independent and comfortable life.

After a few weeks, with renewed confidence, he happily went to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and said, "O Prophet of Allah (S.W.T.), I have got myself a good job, and my living conditions are much better."

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) smiled and reminded him of his earlier advice:
"Did I not tell you that anyone who needs help should seek it from the Almighty, because sustenance comes from Allah (S.W.T.) and He has promised rizq for all His creatures. Such are Allah (S.W.T.)'s infinite blessings! How dignified a person becomes when he is independent and self-reliant."

FRUITS OF HARD LABOUR

Almighty Allah (S.W.T.) has given a special status to human beings. Human beings are created with honour and dignity. Islam has laid great emphasis on hard work and noble ambitions. The goal of a person should be to become self-reliant and not stretch a hand to others.

Worship in Islam has been divided into 70 parts and hard work in order to earn *Halaal* (Lawful) sustenance is one of the best forms of *Ebadat* (Worship).

Our 5th Holy Imam, Al-Baqir (a.s.) has said: *"Whosoever strives to work hard, looks after the well-being of his family and neighbours will surely on the Day of Judgement have his face shining with radiance like the full moon of the 15th night (of every month)."*

Our 6th Holy Imam, Al-Sadiq (a.s.) has also spoken on this important subject saying: *"Whosoever satisfies the needs and desires of his family, it is as if he is performing Jehad in the way of Allah (S.W.T.)."*

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. Asking for ones needs from others is an ugly act according to Islam and Allah (S.W.T.) dislikes such people.
2. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) taught us that we must never humiliate ourselves in front of others. According to Islam, the greatest Jehad is to work hard and put tremendous effort. One must never under any circumstances lose hope in Allah (S.W.T.).
3. The 6th Holy Imam (a.s.) has laid great stress in the importance of working as a valuable form of worship.

Think and Answer

1. How did the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) respond to the needy man's desperation?
2. What advice did the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) give?
3. Discuss with your friends and explain what you understand from the hadith of our 6th Imam (a.s.) mentioned above. Then state the ways in which we can apply it in our lives.

Introduction to Chapter Six

In The Name Of Allah (S.W.T.), the Beneficent, the Merciful

IMAMAT AND LEADERSHIP

We believe our Holy Prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) to be the last heavenly Messenger sent by Allah (S.W.T.). Through his *Risalah* (Prophethood), Islam was truly established and finally completed. Islam expects Muslims to be practical in their lives and to follow its rich principles.

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.) was endowed with the grave responsibility of establishing Allah (S.W.T.)'s Divine Message and training divine spiritual leaders, to protect and maintain the message after him. These leaders would continue to guide the Ummah towards the right path. Thus, our last Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) left behind him Imam Ali (a.s.) as guardian, authority and protector of Islam. Therefore, it is the duty of all Muslims to believe in this appointed Imamat as part of the heavenly path.

Is it possible to believe that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) would fail to appoint a spiritual guide after his departure from this world? What would have happened to the Muslim ummah without a leader to shoulder the heavy responsibilities that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) left behind? The noble Messenger of Allah (S.W.T.) completed the task as ordained by Him, which included the introduction of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) as the rightfully guided Imam sent by the Almighty.

In this chapter, we will study the exalted personality of Imam Ali (a.s.), beginning with his official appointment as Imam over the Ummah.

LESSON 16

THE TWO WEIGHTY THINGS

It was during the last year of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s life that he invited Muslims to join him for the pilgrimage to the holy house of Allah (S.W.T.). The majority of pilgrims who joined him were from Mecca and the pilgrimage came to be known as *Hajjatul-Wida* (The Farewell Hajj) in history.

After completing all the religious rite and duties of Hajj, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) announced that all the pilgrims were to meet with their caravans at a strategic place called "GHADEER KHUM" which was on the outskirts of Mecca. The purpose of this gathering was that he had an important message to deliver to the Muslim Ummah. Some pilgrims went ahead immediately after completion of hajj to reach the place, while others joined them later

It was midday by the time all the people finally gathered at Ghadeer. The sun was overhead and the heat intense. Many wondered at the reason for the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s command and everyone was curious about what he had to say.

After the entire congregation – of thousands – completed the noon prayers led by the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) himself, the main event began. A *mimbar* (Pulpit) was made for the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) so that everyone could see and hear him when he spoke.

After praising, glorifying and thanking Almighty Allah (S.W.T.), he began his sermon:
"*O people! Death is inevitable. It is a reality, which every soul shall taste and experience. I seek His mercy now that I am coming to the last stages of my life. I also ask Him to protect you and you to accept death as a natural process. Indeed! You are all aware of your Islamic duties. I have been able to spread the message of Islam to you all and have guided you towards the right path.*

"I have been inspired by the Almighty that my time of death is near. Soon I shall no longer be amongst you. I leave behind for you TWO WEIGHTY THINGS. They will never be separated from each other. I ask you to be steadfast and uphold these two things so that you may never go astray. They are the Holy Qur'an and my Ahlul-bayt and both are great, valuable treasures. Again I say, they will never be separated from each other…

"The Holy Qur'an is the final heavenly book from Allah (S.W.T.) for the guidance of mankind. The other weighty thing - the Ahlul-bayt - is my pure family. Almighty Allah (S.W.T.) has advised me that these two things will never be separated from each other until till they will meet at the KAUTHAR on the Day of Judgement.

"I wish to see you maintain and keep these two valuable things in your lives."

Then he took the hand of Imam Ali (a.s.) and confirmed:
"*O people! Until today you pledged your allegiance to me and accepted me as your final messenger. Therefore, was I not a God-sent guide to you? Was I not your leader and Allah (S.W.T.)'s representative unto you?* "

The entire congregation replied: " Yes, O Prophet of Allah! You are our guide and Allah (S.W.T.)'s proof!"

At that point, the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.) raised Imam Ali (a.s.)'s hand and proclaimed:
" *Whoever's leader I am, this Ali is his leader, whoever's authority I am, this Ali is now his authority…* "

Then he recited the following dua:
"*O Allah! Protect, help and befriend those who protect, help and befriend Ali, and be the enemy to those who become the enemies of Ali…*"

Through this sermon it becomes apparent that the appointment of Imam Ali (a.s.) as the divine leader was an event of extreme importance. The Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.) confirmed the need of an Imam after his own departure, as a sign from Allah (S.W.T.). It was necessary to have a divinely chosen leader who would

be able to lead an Islamic Government and fulfil the needs of Muslims through the perfect teachings of the Holy Qur'an

The Prophet (s.a.w.w.) then continued with his sermon:
"*For all your difficulties and problems, seek guidance from the Holy Qur'an. By pondering on its verses, understanding its commands and implementing its perfect teachings, you will succeed. As for the other valuable treasure that I leave behind, the Ahlul-bayt, my progeny - the pure infallible family, they are those who become the manifestation of the Quranic teachings. Follow them as your guides. Be aware of your individual duties and responsibilities. Seek guidance from the Ahlul-bayt for they are the Beacons of the Light of Guidance on the perfect path towards Allah.*

"The Holy Qur'an and the Ahlul-bayt can never be separated. So this means that in order to seek happiness in this world and the hereafter, one has to believe and follow both of them as they complete the perfection of Islam."

Such were the valuable words of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) at Ghadeer-e-Khum!

This tradition of the two weighty things is known as *HADITH-E-THAQALAYN* and accepted as an authentic hadith by all Muslims, including the Sunnis.

The sermon of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) at Ghadeer shows us the importance of following Imam Ali (a.s.). On several occasions before this one, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had stressed this issue so that the Ummah would be aware of the concept of *Wilaayah* (Succession) of Imam Ali (a.s.).

Every Muslim must strive to act upon the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s advice on the importance of reading, understanding and practising the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the seeking of guidance from the infallible Aimmah (a.s.) who were the perfect role models after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s demise.

A Holy Saying:

"I leave among you two weighty things: the Book of Allah (S.W.T.) and my Ahlul-bayt, they shall never be separated from each other till they meet at the spring of Kauthar"

The Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.)

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT …

1. The final messenger, our Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) soon after completing his last Hajj, invited a large gathering of *Hujjaj* (pilgrims) to gather at a remote place – Ghadeer-e-Khum. This was in order to make an official announcement of Imam Ali (a.s.)'s *wilaayah*.

2. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) left behind two weighty things in the hands of the Muslims:
    a. The Holy Quran.

b. The Ahlul-Bayt (a.s.) - his pure progeny.

Think and Answer

1. In which place did the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) gather soon after the farewell pilgrimage? What was his official message to the large crowd at this stop?
2. Why do you think the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) would need to leave behind a spiritual guide?
3. What was his prayer after completing his declaration?
4. What do you understand from the Hadith of Thaqalayn.
5. "*The Holy Qur'an and the Ahlulbayt shall never be separated from one another.*" Analyse this tradition. Do Muslims practice this hadith today?

LESSON 17

WHY ALI IBN ABI TALIB AS IMAM?

After the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s demise, no other man could take up the divine leadership except one who was chosen by him under the command of Allah (S.W.T.). As we have seen, this man was no other than Imam Ali (a.s.).

It befits us, as Muslims, to study the life of the great personality - Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.). How much do we know about this man's contribution to humanity and Islam? Not much has been highlighted about his moral conduct, honesty, piety, justice, bravery and humility towards the Allah (S.W.T.) yet he was indeed the shadow of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and the living example of the Holy Qur'an!

Imam Ali (a.s.) was the closest and most beloved person to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.). History shows that from his childhood he took great pains to look after the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and would take food to him while he worshipped at the *Cave of Hira*. These were moments when Imam (a.s.) saw how passionately and deeply the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was immersed in worship of the Merciful Lord.

When the blessed angel Jibraeel descended to him the glad tidings of the heavenly message, the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) knew it was his responsibility to deliver Islam to the world. At that time, Imam Ali (a.s.) was a young boy but mature beyond his years. He was more a man, fully committed to the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and loyal to his cause. He was also the only one in those early days who accompanied and prayed behind the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.).

During the third year of his *Be'that* (Prophethood), the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) generously invited people to Islam and the way to Allah (S.W.T.). Ali (a.s.) was only thirteen years old at the time but he publicly confirmed his submission to Islam. His faith was unparalleled except in regards to that of the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) himself and this verifies why Imam Ali (a.s.) was chosen to be his *Wazir*. He helped and supported the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) in the spread of Islam even in the most troubled times and remained steadfast while others rejected the true message.

The pagan Arabs and Kuffar of Mecca never left the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) in peace after his first call towards Islam. They insulted and ridiculed him in public and sang perverted songs whilst he preached the words of Allah (S.W.T.). When their words did not stop him, they resorted to violence. Physical assaults of all kinds were carried out against the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.)! For a long time, the beastly behaviour of the pagans continued in intensity and with the passing years their resentment grew until finally they decided to kill him. The very night they had planned to carry out their evil intentions, a heavenly message came down on the pure soul of Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) to migrate from Mecca and seek refuge in Yathrib (today known as Madinah).

After receiving this divine revelation, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) requested Imam Ali (a.s.) to sleep on his bed while he journeyed towards Yathrib. This is one of the most famous events in history and is known as the night of *Hijrat* (Migration).

The faithful Imam (a.s.) slept in the Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s bed without hesitation although he knew his life would be in danger. This selfless act on his part helped to trick the enemy into thinking that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) was still in the house when in actual fact he had left the town and gave Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) a chance to cover ground without the fear of being followed.

The character of our first Holy Imam (a.s.) was magnificent and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) described him on various occasions as a Godly-man and one who feared and worshipped none except the Almighty Allah (S.W.T.). He also praised him as an *Aabid* (Worshipper) and a *Mujaahid* (one who stood firm to defend Islam). Imam (a.s.)'s kindness and generosity towards the poor and orphans overwhelmed them while his justice is famed to this day in both the Muslim and non-Muslim societies.

At one time the Holy Imam (a.s.) warned his enemies:
" If all of the Arab world rise and fight against me, I will not be defeated nor will I surrender or compromise. I shall fight for the sake of Allah (S.W.T.) even if thousands of swords embrace me. I will not leave the perfect path of Islam!"

He further went on to say, *"I would rather be swept away by the swords and arrows then die sick in bed."*

One instance of his bravery can be seen in the battlefield of Ohad. When the enemy attacked the Muslims from behind, all the warriors ran from battleground out of fear. At that time, our first Imam (a.s.) stood alone, firmly fighting to safeguard Islam.

Away from the fighting field, Imam Ali (a.s.) was exemplary in his worship and love for Allah (S.W.T.). He spent long hours of the nights in prostration and worship. He first started praying publicly, following the Prophet (s.a.w.w.), at the age of only ten years.

His death was also in the state of worship i.e. while in *sajdah* (prostration). It was in this state that he embraced the glory of shahadat (martyrdom).

After the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.), Imam Ali (a.s.) was the most knowledgeable man. As a man with a strong vision, whose goal was to preserve the teachings of Islam left by the Prophet (s.a.w.w.), he gave many sermons and traditions to the people in order to keep the Message of Islam alive in their hearts and souls. More than a thousand sayings, sermons and letters by the Commander of the Faithful were, in the later times, collected and compiled. They form the contents of the famous book known to be second only to the Holy Qur'an - ***Nahjul Balaagha (The Peak of Eloquence).***

One of the most common hadith concerning Imam Ali (a.s.), which is accepted and confirmed by both the Sunnis and Shiites, is that of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) where he said: *"I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate."*

No justice can be done to the virtues of this Holy Imam (a.s.). Even if we were to study him in depth, it would be quite a task to reveal the greatness of this man. Suffice to say that he was a humble servant of Allah (S.W.T.) and that the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) had repeatedly said to the people that he, Ali, was the *Wali* (Beloved) of Allah (S.W.T.).

Imam (a.s.) spent his life doing various things for the society such as building wells and dams. He worked very hard to get a living and at the end of the day he would give away all that he had earned to the needy and destitute. He led a very simple life and expressed a lot of concern for the orphans, widows and the poor people. Our Holy Imam (a.s.) had no interest in gaining materialistic things like wealth, status and power. A broad smile played on his lips at all times and he never got angry except when a person tried to attack Islam. His excellent akhlaq and conduct with the people attracted all towards him. He even showed compassion to those who had committed crimes, and pardoned many just to gain the acceptance and pleasure of the All-Merciful.

He was the *Furqan* of Islam, which means that he acted as the standard of Allah (S.W.T.)'s Deen. He was the living, talking, walking Qur'an.

A man of absolute conviction with a unique personality, Imam Ali (a.s.) is an example for all times and generations and a perfect role model. As Muslims, we should be proud of having such a great man as our Leader!

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. Imam Ali (a.s.) was the perfect example after the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.).
2. He was the first man to submit and show full commitment to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) and Islam. He helped and protected the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) at all times in delivering the true message of Islam.
3. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) left behind Imam Ali (a.s.) as the perfect spiritual leader and guide after him.
4. Imam (a.s.)'s immaculate personality attracted all the people. He was a man who was brave, just, knowledgeable, kind and a lover of Allah (S.W.T.). Ultimately, he was martyred in the state of sajdah in salaat.
5. The Messenger of Allah (S.W.T.) said several times: *"Ali is the Wali of Allah (S.W.T.)."* He also said: *"I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate"*

Think and Answer

1. Mention some of the characteristics of Imam Ali (a.s.). What makes you love him?

2. In what manner did Imam Ali (a.s.) fight during the battles?
3. Attempt to describe Imam (a.s.)'s Ebadah.
4. Mention the name of the book with the valuable sermons, sayings and letters of Imam and its compiler. Read a part of the book if you haven't before, then describe what you feel while reading it.
5. How did the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.) describe the excellent character of Imam Ali (a.s.)?
6. What manners did our Imam (a.s.) show towards the people? Can such exemplary leaders be found in the Muslim Ummah today?

Introduction to Chapter Seven

In The Name Of Allah (S.W.T.), the Beneficent, the Merciful

AHKAM (LAWS) AND EBADAH (WORSHIP)

Ahkam comes from the Arabic word '*Hukm*' meaning 'Law' while '*Ebadah*' means 'Worship'. From the lessons we studied in the previous chapters, we now know that all our actions must be for the sake and pleasure of Allah (S.W.T.). It is therefore the duty of all those who are *Mukkalaf* (have reached the stage of Buloogh) to familiarize themselves with the Islamic laws and rituals in order to be able to perform their duties accurately.

Ahkam and Ebadah are strong branches of religion. The fundamental Islamic beliefs or the Roots of Religion (Usool-e-Deen) are belief in:

- Tawheed (Monotheism)
- Adalat (Divine Justice of God)
- Nubbuwah (Prophethood)
- Imamah (the 12 infallible Imams) and
- Ma'ad (the Return on the Day of Judgment)

So far, we have discussed issues relating to *AQAID* i.e. the Roots of Religion. Let us now begin to study important issues related to the Branches of Religion. Before we talk about the actual Ahkam that make up these branches, we will briefly study the importance of *Taklif* and *Taqleed*. These enable a Mukkalaf to learn and appreciate the laws of Islam.

After that we will look at the basic rules regarding Wudhoo, Tayyamum, Ghusle-Jum'ah and Congregational prayers.

LESSON 18

TAKLIF AND TAQLEED

Once a person reaches the age of Taklif (estimated at completion of 15 years for boys and 9 years for girls) he is called a *MUKKALAF.* This means that that individual has reached a point where he has become answerable to Allah (S.W.T.) for all the obligatory actions and duties prescribed by Him.

When a Muslim becomes a Mukkalaf, he must learn all his wajibat, which include Salaat, Sawm, Hajj and Zakat amongst others. A Mukkalaf must also avoid doing anything Haram (forbidden) such as lying and stealing. Those who do not avoid that which is forbidden, will suffer Allah (S.W.T.)'s wrath and punishment. Disobedience to the Almighty who has created us all is a grave sin.

Ahkam and Ebadah thus form the core of Islam. Allah (S.W.T.) expects human beings to attain happiness in the eternal abode by seeking His pleasure in this world.

However, every human being must try to utilize his *Aql* (Reasoning) in his beliefs. He must spend time searching for the philosophy behind the religious duties and

not perform them blindly. This will deepen the effect of the action and strengthen his faith in Allah (S.W.T.) the Creator. Logical proofs are a necessary ingredient in the quest for the true path. One has to fully understand his beliefs and cannot follow another persons' ideas in this matter. This is the reason why Islam does not allow *Taqlid* (acting according to the verdict of another) in *Usool – e – Deen.*

Coming to the Branches or the laws, how can one learn the practical laws of Islam? How can we derive the *Haram* (Prohibited) and *Halal* (Lawful) actions from the Qur'an and the Sunnah? Is it possible for everyone or just anyone to teach this important issue? Can all pursue higher studies to the point of *Ijtihad* i.e. learning, analyzing and understanding all the Ahkams?

Such a great task is not possible for everyone. The majority of us cannot attain the highest stage of Ijtihad and so the question is what should we do in order to ensure that our actions are according to the command of Allah (S.W.T.)?

Thus, we can see the need to follow a *Marja'e Taqleed.* It is therefore necessary for every Mukkalaf to follow the present A'alam in the laws of Islam.

SOME OF THE MASA'ILS CONCERNING TAQLEED

Taqleed in religious laws means acting according to the verdict of a Mujtahid. It is necessary for that Mujtahid, among other things, to be:

- Male
- Shi'a Ithna Asheri
- Adult
- Sane
- Of Legitimate Birth
- Living
- Adil (Just)

IDENTIFYING AN A'ALAM MUJTAHID

1. When one is certain that a particular person is the most learned Mujtahid alive and possesses Islamic understanding in making laws, then he can consider him as an A'alam amongst the existing Marja'e Taqleed
2. When two learned persons recognize a scholar as an A'alam and confirm this, then, provided that two other learned and just persons do not contradict them, this can be taken as a fact. The fact can also be established by a statement of only one trusted and reliable person
3. When a number of learned persons (Aalim) claim and certify that a Marja'e Taqlid is the A'alam of the time then this can also be accepted provided all are satisfied by the learned people's verdict.

Think and Answer

1. When does a girl/boy enter the stage of Buloogh?

2. What are the duties of a Mukkalaf?
3. Define Taqleed in the Islamic terminology.
4. What are the qualities of a Mujtahid?
5. Who can be called a Marja'e Taqleed?

LESSON 19

WUDHOO AND TAYYAMUM

We perform *Wudhoo* to clean and prepare ourselves physically, spiritually and mentally for direct communion with the Almighty. We begin with the beautiful words in praise of the Supreme Lord saying "*Bismillahir Rahman Rahim*" which means "In the name of Allah (S.W.T.), the Beneficent, the most Merciful."

In Wudhoo, we physically wash our hands and face while asking Allah (S.W.T.) to forgive us and wash our souls clean from all sins. Through this act, we bear witness in the Oneness of Allah (S.W.T.) and in the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) before we begin our *Salaat* (Prayers).

Incase one is unable to perform Wudhoo (conditions are listed at the end of the lesson), he has the option of performing *Tayyamum*.

PERFORMING WUDHOO

The following are the basic steps of performing Wudhoo

1. Make a Niyyah (Intention) that you are performing the Wudhoo for the sake of Allah (S.W.T.).
2. Wash your face. The area that must be covered in this step is from the upper part of the forehead, where the hair begins to grow, down to the farthest end of the chin and what falls between the thumb and the middle finger (across the face).
3. After washing your face, wash your right arm from the elbows to the tips of the fingers.
4. Now wash your left arm in same manner as above.
5. The next step is wiping the front part of your head. Do not take more water but use the wetness left on your hand from the previous step.
6. Next continue with the same wet hands and wipe your right foot from any toe of the foot up to the ankle joint.
7. Finally, wipe your left foot to complete your wudhoo.

TAYYAMUM

Under certain circumstances, instead of Wudhoo, we are allowed to perform Tayyamum. A person can perform Tayammum if:

1. He has no access to pure and clean water.
2. Water is harmful to his health/body at that time.
3. There is very little time before the prayer becomes Qadha and performing Wudhoo will take too long.

Tayyamum can be performed on the following things:

- ❖ Earth
- ❖ Sand – hard or soft

- A Lump of clay
- Dust that gather on dresses, carpets etc.

PERFORMING TAYYAMUM

We will describe the process using dust as our medium.

1. First of all make a Niyyah (Intention) similar to the one you would for Wudhoo.
2. Gently strike or keep both palms on the dust. This should be done with both the palms at the same time.
3. Wipe/stroke your forehead with the palms of both hands. You must cover all the area from the point where your hair grows down to the eyebrows just above the nose. It is recommended that you pass your palms over the eyebrows as well. You can do this by beginning from the middle of the forehead and then passing your palms to the left and right ends.
4. Next, pass your left palm on the back of your right hand and after that pass your right palm on the back of your left hand.
5. Strike your hands on the dust for a second time and repeat the fourth step above.

IMPORTANT NOTES

1. Tayyamum is a replacement for Wudhoo *only* under certain conditions.
2. Tayyamum can be performed on sand, dust or earth.
3. Tayyamum performed on Najis or Ghasbi sand is *Batil* (Null)

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

Tayyamum when performed instead of Wudhoo must be carried out in the following sequence:
First strike your hands on the earth, then wipe your forehead and the back of your hands, and then strike the hands on the earth once again to wipe the back of the hands for the last time.

Think and Answer

1. In what circumstances can one perform Tayyamum instead of Wudhoo?
2. Mention the seven steps of Wudhoo in sequence (Tartib).
3. Mention the five steps of Tayyamum in sequence.

Practical

Perform Wudhoo and Tayyamum in front of your teacher.

LESSON 20

GHUSLE – JUM'UAH

Islam is a religion that gives much importance to both physical cleanliness and spiritual purity. Muslims are advised to always wear clean clothes. Washing ones hands before and after every meal and brushing ones teeth after every meal are also acts that are greatly recommended. A Muslim must take a bath everyday, so as to remain fresh and clean. It is commonly said that "CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS". How true! If we think about it, we will appreciate the fact that it is only through the physical, mental *and* spiritual purity that we can attain nearness to Allah (S.W.T.).

In Islam, the word *Ghusl* means 'the washing of one's body in a manner that is defined.' This is considered as one form of Ebadah (Worship) in Islam. In some cases *Ghusl* becomes obligatory and is supposed to be performed in a specific way as prescribed by the Islamic law. At other times *Ghusl* is *Mustahab.* This means that it is highly recommended and given much reward but is not mandatory. Amongst these *Mustahab Ghusl*, one of the most highly recommended is *Ghusle-Jum'uah* (Friday Bath).

According to our sixth Holy Imam, Al-Sadiq (a.s.),
"It is highly recommended to participate in the Friday prayers, wearing one's best, clean and perfumed clothes."

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) advised Imam Ali (a.s.) as follows:
"One should never miss the opportunity of performing Ghusle-Jum'uah, even if one has to spend away hi money for food to buy the water for performing the Ghusl because Ghusle-Jum'uah is one of the exalted and the best recommended acts of worship in Islam."

PERFORMING GHUSLE-JUM'UAH

First and foremost, you must wash and remove all the dirt and impurities from your body with soap and water. Then, perform the *Ghusl* in the following manner:

1. First make a *Niyyah* that you are performing *Ghusle-Jum'aah* to seek the pleasure and happiness of Allah (S.W.T.).
2. After that, run water over your head and neck with water, so that all the parts are washed – back and front.
3. Next wash the right side of your body beginning from the neck downwards including shoulders, arms, hands and the lower body down to the soles of your feet. Leave no part of your body dry or unwashed.
4. Finally, wash the left side of your body, in the same manner as the right. Remember, no part of your body should be left unwashed.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. When performing *Ghusl*, one must ensure that no parts are left dry and the whole body is washed thoroughly. However, it is not necessary to run water inside the ears or eyes!
2. Sometimes it happens that while washing one part of the body, water may run onto parts that have already been washed e.g. when washing the left side, water will run onto the already washed right side. There is no problem in that matter.
3. While performing *Ghusl*, it is only necessary that the three major steps be followed. However, within the steps it is not necessary that the *Ghusl* be performed from the top of the body to the bottom (neck to legs), one can wash the body in any manner as long as water reaches all parts of the body required.
4. All the *Ghusl* have the same sequence, it is only the *niyyah* that changes.
5. The water used for *Ghusl* must be *Mubah* (Pure) and should not be *Ghasbi* (unlawfully acquired). If it is not so, then the *Ghusl* will automatically become null and void.

Think and Answer

1. How should one perform *Ghusle-Jum'uah*?
2. What did the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) recommend to Imam Ali (a.s.) concerning this *Ghusl*?
3. How should one prepare to attend Salatul Jum'uah? Quote any hadith you know of regarding your answers.

LESSON 21

HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

Salaat (Prayer) is one of the most profound acts of worship. It is the strongest pillar of Islam and the best of all acts of worship. In order to gain closeness to Allah (S.W.T.), one of the pre-requisites is that one must have a pure heart so as to be able beseech Him in prayer and open one's heart to Him sincerely.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) advised all Muslims,
"*Praying is like getting rid of all the dirt and becoming clean and pure. For every prayer, one has to cleanse oneself with water to be able to pray. If a person purifies himself five times in a day, is it possible for him to remain dirty and impure?"*

It is obligatory for every Muslim to pray five times a day, in this regard, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) has stressed: *"ONE WHO IS NIGGARDLY OF PRAYERS, WILL BE AWAY FROM ME (on the Day of Judgement)."*

The practical actions and *Adaab* (etiquettes) of prayer are very important and we must be careful to perform them properly. Before we describe the details of these adaab, we must know that all the acts must be performed step by step, one after the other. This is called *Tartib.*

METHOD OF PRAYER

(We will use the four-rakaat (unit) Dhohr prayers for our example.)

1. Face the *Qiblah* and recite *Niyyat* with absolute concentration. Remind yourself that you are of the fact that you are standing before the Almighty Lord and entering into a communication with Him. Your *niyyat* should be as follows:
   "*I am performing 4 rakaat Salaat of Dhohr for seeking the pleasure of and nearness to Allah (S.W.T.).*"

2. After the intention, recite "*Allaho Akbar*" and simultaneously raise your hands, palms forward, and thumbs touching your ears. This is called *Takbiratul – Ehraam.*

3. You are now in the state of *Qiyam.* Here, recite Sura Fateha and any other small Sura e.g. Sura Ikhlaas.

4. When you have completed Qiyam by reciting the two Surahs, then bend down for *Ruku.* Make sure that your hands reach the knees and recite the following *dhikr*:
   "Subhaanaa Rabbi al-Adhimi wa Bihamdihi"

5. Stand up from Ruku and say:
   "Samii- Allahu Liman Hamidaah"

6. Now prepare to go into *Sajdah*. This is an important part of prayer because a person places his forehead on the earth with an intention of showing humility before the Almighty. While performing *Sajdah* during prayers, it is obligatory that both the palms and the knees, and both the big toes are touching the ground. The Shiites use *Khaake Shafaa* (Earth from of Karbala) or any other sand from Holy places on which to place their foreheads.
   During the *Sajdah* recite:
   "Subhaana Rabbi Al-Aa'laa Wa Bi Hamdihi."

7. After the first *sajdah*, sit up with your legs folded under you and recite:
   "Astaghfirullaha Rabbi wa Atoobu Ilay"

8. Go down into the second Sajdah and recite the same *dhikr* as in the first one. After the completion of both sajdah, stand up smoothly for the second rakaat while reciting:
   "Bihawlilaahi Wa Quwwatihi Aquumu Wa Aq'uud"

9. The *Qiyam* of the second rakaat is identical to the first one except that after the second surah, you must raise your hands in du'a and recite the *Qunut*. Any du'a may be recited but the most common one is:
   "Rabbanna Aatinaa Fi-Dunya Hassanatanw Wa Fil Akherati Hassanatanw Wa Qinaa Adhabun-Naar."

10. Continue the rakaat in the same manner as the first one until you finish the second sajdah. This time instead of standing up straight away, sit (as between the sajdah) and recite *Tashahud* in the following manner:
    "Alhamdu Lilaah, Ashhadu An Laa Illaha Illa Allahu Wahdahu Laa Sharika Lahu wa Ashhadu Anna Muhammadan Abduhu wa Rasuluhu Allahumma Swalli Alaa Muhammadin Wa Ali Muhammad."

    After Tashahud, recite the same dhikr as before while standing up for the third rakaat.

11. In the third rakaat, in place of the two surahs recite *Tasbihaate Arba'a*, which is the recitation of the following statement three times:
    "Subhaana Lahii Wal Hamdu Lilaahi Wa Laa Illaha Illa Lahu Wallahu Akbar"

12. Complete the third rakaat in the same manner as the first one, standing up for the fourth rakaat immediately after the two sajdah.

13. The fourth rakaat is identical to the third rakaat until the point at which you complete the two sajdah. After that sit up and recite Tashahud as in the second rakaat and after that begin your *Salaam* reciting:
    "Assalamu Alaika Ayyuhan Nabbiyu Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu, Assalamu Alaina Wa A'la Ibaadilaahi- Saalihin Assalamun Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu"

With the finishing of Salaam, your salaat is completed.

DIFFERENCES IN THE WAJIB SALAAT

- Fajr consists of two rakaats, prayed as the first two of Dhohr except that the Salaam is recited after the Tashahud of the second rakaat.
- The Salaat of Asr and Isha are just like that of Dhohr except that their niyyat is different.
- Maghrib has three rakaats. The three rakaats are same as those of Dhohr prayers but after the two sajdah in the third rakaat, sit up and recite Tashahud and Salaam to complete the prayer.

THE TIMINGS OF PRAYERS

- The time for Fajr commences from the first appearance of whiteness in the morning till the rising of the sun.
- Salaatul-Dhohr and Asr start from Dhohr (mid-day) till the dusk.
- Maghrib and Isha start from the beginning of dusk (sunset) till midnight.

Think and Answer

1. Between what times do we pray Fajr prayers?
2. From what time to what time do we pray Dhohr and Asr prayers?
3. When do we perform the Maghrib and Isha prayers?

LESSON 22

PRAYING SALAAT IN CONGREGATION

Afif the son of Qays was sitting with Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib when he saw a man approach the Holy Ka'abah. The man stood facing the Holy house, a youth and a woman came and stood behind him. When the man bowed, the youth and woman bowed too and when he prostrated on the ground, they followed him in action.

Afif turned to Abbas and asked him if he knew who the man was and what he was doing. Abbas replied "O Afif! The man standing right in front is Muhammad, son of Abdullah. And the handsome boy is Ali, son of Abu Taalib. That lady is Khadija, wife of Muhammad. Muhammad says that he has been given divine orders from the Lord of the Heavens and the Earth and that he has been bestowed with the *Risalah* so as to guide mankind to the right path.

"He also says *'Allah (S.W.T.) has commanded me to enjoin mankind towards the virtues of prayers.'* and thus they pray in congregation in this manner."

It is true that the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.w.) enlightened us towards the worship of Allah (S.W.T.) and taught us the beautiful form of *Salaat*. He taught us that, *"Prayer is only in congregation"*. This means that we must attempt to pray in congregation at all times and should only pray alone if the circumstances force us to.

Islam encourages peace, love, harmony, co-operation and social interaction with between Muslims so as to create unity and brotherhood amongst them. Such encouragement towards communal practices can be seen in all acts of *Ebaadah*. Prayer in particular is one of the most adorable acts of worship, especially when performed in congregation.

The history of Islam clearly shows that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.)'s constantly advised his followers to pray in *Jama'at* (Congregation). During his *Be'that*, he guided the Muslims to not only pray for one another but love and care for each other in order to spread the true word of Islam. This unity allowed the Muslims to withstand all the tortures and attacks from the *Kuffar*. In fact, they loved to pray together so much that several incidents are found where they followed the Prophet (s.a.w.w.) up the mountains so that they could pray behind him in Jam'aat. Even in midst of battles, they tried not to miss a single opportunity of praying in congregation.

One of the greatest examples of the importance of Salaat is that shown to us on the day of Ashoora. Our third Holy Imam, Hussayn (a.s.) stood on the plains of Karbala, surrounded by thousands of enemy soldiers yet, in the middle of battle, he and his faithful followers prayed in *Jama'at* at the time for prayers. Such was their intense love, faith and submission to the Almighty!

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.w.) made it very clear that avoiding congregational prayers was amongst the signs of hypocrisy and *Kufr*. It is therefore our duty to take his orders on salaat seriously.

Praying together has great benefits on the society. The standing in lines, shoulder to shoulder – rich, poor, black, brown, white, all the same in the eyes of the Lord – and *Musaafaha* (hand shaking after prayers) creates a strong bond of friendship which if nurtured, blossoms in the Muslim communities and becomes a shining example for others to emulate. Prayer in *Jama'at* allows people to get to know each other and creates love between Muslim brothers.

Our eighth Holy Imam, Al-Redha (a.s.) has said:
"*Anyone who intentionally makes (lame) excuses for not attending the congregational prayers will not be accepted by the Almighty Creator.*"

When praying in congregation it is necessary to follow an *Imam* (leader). This man must be God-fearing, just and one who is acquainted with the Islamic Sheriat. Only then can he lead others in prayer.

During congregational prayers, all must stand in absolute discipline and order behind the Imam and show humility towards the Lord and the Master of the Universe. You must try and feel His presence and love in your heart.

After *Takbiratul-Ehraam* when you raise your hands to the skies and say "*Allaho Akbar*", try and feel the greatness of Allah (S.W.T.) and realise how weak you are in front of His Majesty. Sincerity of intention is one of the most important requirements in communication with the Lord.

The followers of *Jama'at* must follow the Imam in all the actions in prayers. In the first 2 *Rakaats* (units), while the Imam recites Sura Al-Hamd and any another short Sura, his followers must remain silent and concentrate on the words. However, all other *dhikr* may be read (silently) by those in *Jama'at*.

It has been said by our eighth Holy Imam, Al-Redha (a.s.):
"*One rakaat of Salaat in congregation is equivalent to a thousand rakaats of fardh (individual) prayers*!"

The great spiritual leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Imam Khomeini (May the Almighty be pleased with his soul) said:
"Fill the mosques with your presence, for they are the central pivot of Islam. Indeed! The enemies are afraid of the mosques and their worshippers."

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT…

1. For a man to qualify as Imam for leading *Jama'at* he must be known to be Just, possess *Taqwa* (Piety) and be able to recite the *dhikr* correctly.

2. It is highly recommended to pray in congregation in the Mosque so as to attract a large attendance of worshippers. Countless reward is bestowed to those who attend in Jama'at.
3. Whenever it is difficult to attend the *Jama'at* prayers in the mosque, you should arrange to pray in *Jama'at* at home, at school, or at your place of work. Anyone who has the criterion for being the Imam can conduct the prayers.
4. Islam is a way of Life. It encourages social activities that motivate and mobilise the spirit of love, unity and brotherhood.
5. *Salaat* was originally in *Jama'at*.
6. Attendance in congregational prayers is a sign of a practising Muslim.
7. The *masjid* (mosque) is a central strong point of Islam.

Think and Answer

1. Compare the results of congregational and individual prayers.
2. What are the conditions that the Imam leading *Jama'at* prayers must fulfil?
3. What is the reward for joining the congregation according to the sayings of the eighth Holy Imam, al-Redha (a.s.)?
4. What does the fifth Holy Imam, al-Baqir (a.s.) advise in reference to anyone who is reluctant in joining *Salaatul Jama'at*?
5. What are your experiences in *Salaatul Jama'at*? These days do many Muslims pray in congregation?

ANECDOTE

Prayer of the Mercy-Seeking Servant

A learned man laid his head against the door of the Ka'abah in Mecca. I happened to be near him and listened to him praying to Allah (S.W.T.). He spoke thus:
"*O Merciful Allah (S.W.T.)! What can a sinful and ignorant man like me do before You that might be worthy of Your pleasure? I have no claim on the score of obedience and beg Your forgiveness for my imperfect performance.*

The wicked repent their sins and those who know Allah (S.W.T.) confess deficiency in worship. The pious hope for Your mercy, like beggars. Do to me what is worthy of You, and do not deal with me as I deserve."